IMPRIMATUR,

*August* 24. 1691.

R. A. BARKER.

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# THE NECESSITY OF Serious Conſideration, AND SPEEDY REPENTANCE, As the only WAY to be SAFE BOTH LIVING and DYING.

By *CLEMENT ELIS*, M. A.
Rector of *Kirkby* in *Nottinghamſhire.*

Pſalm 119. 59, 60. *I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy teſtimonies.*
*I made haſte, and delayed not to keep thy commandments.*

*LONDON:*
Printed, and are to be Sold by *William Rogers* at the *Sun* over-againſt St. *Dunſtans* Church in *Fleet-ſtreet*, and *Thomas Elis* in *Mansfield.* 1691.

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TO MY

# CHILDREN.

My dear Children,

THO *this Plain Diſcourſe of* The Neceſſity of SERIOUS CONSIDERATION and SPEEDY REPENTANCE, *ſeem to me very needful to many, and is therefore publiſhed, that all who need it, and pleaſe to make uſe of it, may have by them a* friendly Rememebrancer *to put them in mind to take all due care of themſelves: Yet becauſe of the ſpecial* Love *and* Care *I ought to have for you, as I am your* Father, *I do in a more ſpecial manner commend it to you, as the very* beſt Advice *I am able to give you; and ſeeing my life cannot now be much longer, it may be the laſt.*

*If I have expected from you the* Duty *of* Obedient Children, *it hath been always more for* your ſakes *than* mine own; *that you might be ſharers in that ſpecial* Promiſe *which St.* Paul *tells you belongs to them that* Honour their Father and Mother, *Epheſ.* 6. 2, 3. *And I ſhall always reckon, that you very fully pay all that* Honour *which you owe to me, ſo long as I ſee*

*you make it your chief buſineſs to* fear God, and keep his Commandments, which is your whole Duty, *Eccl.* 12. 13. *Honour always your* Father which is in Heaven; *and be ſure you can do no greater Honour than that to your Parents upon Earth. And as you may juſtly expect from me the* Love *and* Care *of a* Father; *ſo you ought to think, that I never better expreſs either of them towards you, than when, as the ſame St.* Paul *hath commanded me, I endeavour* to bring you up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, *v.* 4. *For whatever elſe God ſhall enable me to do for you, in this I take care at once both of your* Souls *and* Bodies; Godlineſs having the promiſe of the life that now is, and of that which is to come, 1 *Tim.* 4. 8.

*I dare not be confident, that I have not much fail'd you in this Duty of a* Father, *whilſt you were all at home with me, and under my eye. Neither can I now hope to have you again much with me whilſt I live, or indeed that I ſhall live much longer to take any care at all of you. The only way therefore that is now left me, either to make you amends for ſuch* neglects *of you, as I may have been at any time guilty of; or to teſtify my* earneſt deſire, *that you may be always happy in the* Service, *and under the* Bleſſing *of* Almighty God, *the* FATHER, SON, *and* HOLY GHOST, *to whom you were in your* Baptiſm *dedicated; is* firſt, *daily ſo long as I*

*live*

*live to pray for his* Grace *to* guide *and* govern *you in the ways of* Truth *and* Holineſs *to* Eternal Life; *and* then *to put into your hands the ſubſtance of all thoſe* pious Inſtructions *which I could ever be able to give you, were we to live here together to the World's end.*

*This, if I miſtake not, I have already in ſome good meaſure done in three ſmall Books, viz.* CHRISTIANITY in SHORT; the SCRIPTURE-CATECHISM, and the COMMUNICANT'S GUIDE. *If you be perfect in theſe, you will underſtand reaſonably well both what you are to* believe, do, deſire, *and* hope *for; and will be able to reap more benefit by the reading of other more* excellent Books, *and chiefly that* Book of books, the BOOK of GOD, *which I do charge you with all the* Authority *of a* Father, *to read ſo long as you live, when not unavoidably hinder'd (ſome part of it daily); and that with the greateſt* ſerioufneſs *and* attention *of mind, with the* devouteſt Reverence *to the Great* GOD, *whoſe* Word *it is, and with moſt* earneſt Prayers *to* Him, *to* enlighten *your* underſtandings *by it, and to* conform *your* Wills *wholly unto it.*

Conſider *well all that you* read *or* hear, *and* ſpeedily *put in* practice *all that is your* Duty *to do, and caſt off every* Sin *without* delay; *As this* Diſcourſe *will, I hope, convince you, it is altogether neceſſary for you to do. Having there-*

*in ſaid ſo much to* you *and* others *joyntly, I ſhall not need to ſay much more now to* you alone. *Only let me adviſe you to bear this always in remembrance, That if you will be ſaved, it muſt be by* obeying the Goſpel of JESUS CHRIST, our only Saviour, *which you cannot do, but by* denying your ſelves, *by doing* his will *and not* your own; *following* his Rules, *and not the* Cuſtoms *and* Faſhions *of the Perſons, great or ſmall, amongſt whom you live.* Our *Wills* are *corrupt* and *perverſe, and the Multitude is always in the* broad way to Deſtruction. *You have need of much* Chriſtian courage *to ſave your ſelves from this* untoward Generation. *O, as you love God and your ſelves, be neither* aſhamed *nor* afraid *to live as the* few *do, which are in the* narrow way to Life. *Stoutly* reſolve *to be as* indifferent *for the World, as you ſee many* zealous *for it; and as* zealous *for* God *and* Heaven, *as you ſee others* regardleſs *of them.* Pray *fervently for ſtrength to* do *as you* reſolve; and then I doubt not, but you will be a *comfort* to *me whilſt I live, and an* Honour *to me when I am dead; and when you are dead too, we ſhall all live together again in the* Eternal Joys *of* Heaven, *through* JESUS CHRIST *our* Lord. *Amen.*

THE

# THE NECESSITY OF Serious Conſideration.

## The INTRODUCTION.

THAT Exhortation which St. *Peter* hath given unto Chriſtians, 2 Pet. 1. 10. *To give diligence to make their calling and election ſure*, muſt needs appear at the very firſt hearing of it, ſo very *reaſonable*, and ſo much for our *Advantge* every way, that one would think it ſhould be moſt readily embraced, and immediately put in practice by every one that loves himſelf. Can any one, who hath any love for himſelf (as who hath not in ſome ſenſe or other?) reſt himſelf content and well ſatisfied, ſo long as he apprehends himſelf to be in an *unſafe* and *dangerous* Condition,

dition, and knows a way how to come out of it? Is it not natural to all Men in ſuch a Caſe to beſtir themſelves, and to ſeek out diligently all the means of *ſafety*, and never to ceaſe from ſo doing, till they think themſelves as ſure as Men can be, that all the danger is over; and that they need no longer to *fear*, either to loſe the *good* they *love*, or to *ſuffer* the *Evil* they *abhor?* Yes, it is natural enough to us all, to uſe as much, and oftentimes a great deal more diligence, than it is either *needful* or *fit* for us to uſe, that we may ſecure the ſafety of our *Bodies*, and even of the leaſt valuable parts of our *Eſtates* in this World; which yet it is not in our power to do, tho we do all that ever we can to that purpoſe. But alas! we are ſo far from uſing any ſuch diligence in endeavouring to make ſure to our ſelves our *Eternal Happineſs*, (tho we may be always as ſure, that we ſhall have power to do this, as we are that we ſincerely endeavour it) that we hardly once conſider, that we are in any danger of loſing it.

Surely it will be granted by all, That a *bleſſed Life* for ever in *Heaven*, after this very *ſhort* and very *troubleſome* Life on *Earth* ſhall be at an end, is a very deſirable thing; and ſuch as one cannot but deſire, when he hath well

well conſider'd, That *there* it may be had, but *here* it cannot. And tho' there may be ſome, who do not yet believe, that ſuch a life of *eternal Bleſſedneſs* is to be had in Heaven after Death; yet I dare ſay, that even theſe, ſeeing they know they muſt ſhortly die, could heartily wiſh it might be ſo. I cannot eaſily be perſuaded to think, that any one can hate *Life* for any thing elſe but the *troubles* and the *miſeries* which he finds it cannot be without: And therefore I believe, that no Man would willingly *die*, and be no more for ever, ſuppoſing it poſſible that he may *live again* for ever without any ſuch *troubles* or *miſeries*. Now every one knows, that he muſt die, and that it cannot be long ere he muſt live no more here; and therefore no Man can chuſe but wiſh, that, if it be poſſible, he may live again: Eſpecially if he may be ſure, both to live a happy life, and to die no more.

And bleſſed for ever be our Lord JESUS CHRIST, who hath given us aſſurance, that there is ſuch a Life prepared for all that are his faithful followers! *He hath aboliſhed death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the Goſpel*, 2 Tim. I. 10. And being *Himſelf the way, the truth, and the life*, Joh. XIV. 6. hath pointed out unto us *the narrow way which leadeth unto life*, Mat. VII 14.

And

And this is no other but the way of God's Commandments, *Rev.* XXII. 14. *Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life.* Whosoever therefore desires an *eternal blessed Life* after *Death*, and has a mind to make it *sure* unto himself, must make *haste* to get into this way, and be very careful to keep it so long as he lives. He must get into this way, because there is no other way to Life; and he must make haste to get into it, because Death follows him every day at his Heels, and he knows not how soon it will be upon him; and if he get not into the way of Life before it overtakes him, he must die and be miserable for ever. And he must be sure to keep it all the days of his present Life, because whenever he goes out of it, he is in the way to eternal Death.

The time of this *present Life* (how short soever it may be) is to be look'd upon as the *only time* of making an *eternal Life* sure unto us. If we let this *time* pass over us before we are prepared for that *Eternity*, it is like to prove unto us an *Eternity* of *Sorrows*. Now are we travelling toward *God* our *Happiness*, and those heavenly *Mansions*, which the *Eternal Son of God*, and our *only Saviour* is gone before to prepare for us; and where we hope to be for ever with the

Lord.

Lord. Whilst we *live*, we are but in the *way*, and not at *home* in our Country: *Here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come*, Heb. XIII. 14. And the same blessed JESUS, who hath open'd the Gate of Life unto us by his own *Death* and *Resurrection*, and is our only sure *Guide* unto it, hath acquainted us with two ways, and no more, that we can walk in whilst here we live; the *broad way* to *Destruction*, wherein go the *Multitude*; and the *narrow way* to *Life*, wherein but *few* walk: If then we step out of the *one way*, we must needs be in the *other*; for there is no *middle Path* to be found, wherein we may *walk*, and neither go to *Life* nor *Destruction*. The *broad way* is that of *Men's Lusts*, wherein there is *Latitude* enough; and the *narrow way* is the way of *God's Commandments*; and a Man must be very *strict* and *upright* in his walking therein, and must not swerve either to the Right-hand or to the Left, if he have a mind to be safe.

It seems (I must needs say) one of the strangest things in the World to me, that we all should be so exceedingly concern'd, as at every turn we shew our selves to be, about our living *safely* and *comfortably* in this *present* World; so that we cannot hear the least ill news, but it puts us quite out of humour;

mour; and we are all in fears what will become of us: And yet so very few amongst us seem to have any concernment at all upon them, what shall become of them when they *die!* I confess, if Men could be any way assured, that there is nothing at all to be expected after Death, I should the less wonder, that their whole concern should be for this Life; because I know nothing else that they should be concern'd for. But seeing it is an impossible thing, that any one should be assured of that; and seeing we have all the assurance that Men can have of the contrary; *to wit*, That an endless state of either *Happiness* or *Misery* shall follow our short life here; what an unaccountable madness seems this to be, which has so generally possess'd us, to be so concern'd, how we shall fare for a few Days here, and altogether as regardless (for so the most of us seem to be) how it shall go with us for evermore! Whence can this proceed, but from *inconsideration*, or want of *thinking* on things as Men should do? If we did really think in earnest, *what we are, whence we came, what we have here to do, how soon we may and must go hence; whither we are to go, and what shall finally become of us*; we must needs become a little more *serious* and *provident* both, than now we are; and how little *assurance* soever we had of

what

what is to come, we would be concern'd a little, ſo to behave our ſelves in this World, as we might go out of it with this Comfort at leaſt, That if we can be *ſure* of no *good* after Death, yet we ſhould not need to *fear* any *evil*. Any one that is wiſe, if he have no hopes to be *Happy*, would yet take a courſe to be *Safe*. And yet (God knows!) the generality of People are far ſhort of this Wiſdom. All we ſeem to mind, is ſome little thing that we take pleaſure in for the preſent; and all our care is, not to loſe that, whatever it be, ſo long as we live. But we ſo little think of what either *ſhall* be, or *may* be after Death; yea, and (what's ſtranger, conſidering we know it ſo well) we ſo little think, that we are every moment ſtepping towards the Grave, and that the next ſtep we take, for ought we know, may be into it; that Death *ſurpriſeth* moſt of us, when ever it comes; and how *ſlowly* ſoever, through God's wonderful *forbearance*, it come; yet it ſteals upon us *unaware*, and takes us *unprepared*, and ſo proves (what we are well-taught to pray againſt) a *ſudden Death* to moſt of us; and if there be any thing worſe than another after Death (as certainly there is both a *better* and a *worſe* than any thing can be in this World) we are ſure of it. To make us a little more ſenſible of this great

great *folly*, and to ſhew us what courſe we are to take, if we have any mind to do our ſelves good, or have no mind to make our ſelves miſerable for ever, is the deſign of this Diſcourſe. And I ſhall divide it into Two *Parts*. In the former of which I ſhall ſhew the Neceſſity of a *Serious Conſideration*, and give ſome few Directions for it. In the later ſhall be ſhewn the Danger of *Delaying our Repentance*, and an Exhortation given to make haſte to live well, that we may be always ready to die well; *and ſo make ſure* of Life Eternal.

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PART

# PART I.

## OF CONSIDERATION.

HE that would make sure of eternal Life, and escape everlasting Torments, must take care to do it in this World, before he be call'd out of it by Death: For the time of this present Life is the only time which God hath given us to prepare our selves for Eternity; and as we behave our selves now, so must we expect to fare for ever. And the best course that we can be directed to take, that we may be sure of Eternal Blessedness, is the same which *David* tells us he took; *Psalm* CXIX. 59, 60. in these words: *I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies: I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments.* Where we are to observe both what he did, and what he did not.

1. That which he did was this: *Firſt, He thought on his ways.* He enter'd into a *Serious Conſideration* of his own courſe of Life, that he might underſtand thereby, what his preſent State and Condition was; and whether ſuch a Life was agreeable to the Law of God or no; and conſequently, whether it would bring him to Happineſs or Miſery. And, *Secondly*, Having conſidered this well, *He turned his feet unto God's Teſtimonies*; and *he made haſte to keep his Commandments.* Whatſoever he found amiſs in himſelf, he immediately corrected it by a ſpeedy *Repentance*, regulating his whole Converſation henceforward by the right Rule thereof, *the Commandments of God.*

2. That which he did not, was this: *He delayed not to keep God's Commandments.* Or, as ſome render it, he was not troubled, or diſturbed in mind about it; or he had no diſpute within himſelf, Whether he ſhould, or he ſhould not; or whether he ſhould do it juſt now, or ſtay till ſome other time; but without any delay, or driving it off from day to day, or ſo much as one moment longer, he preſently ſet himſelf to the keeping of God's Commandments. He did not, as *Felix* did, Acts XXIV. 25. who when he had heard St. *Paul reaſoning of Righteouſneſs,*

*Tempe-*

*Temperance, and Judgment to come,* was so far concern'd, as that he fell *a trembling*; but yet put off the farther *consideration* of what he had then heard, to a more convenient time: *Go thy way,* saith he, *for this time; when I have a more convenient season, I will call for thee.* A season which, as far as we know, he never found. *David* was wiser for himself than so: He had not only consider'd his ways, but also the uncertainty of his life. He knew that he had not time at his command, he could not make it stay his leisure; therefore he took it whilst it was there; considering withal, that the time present is always the most convenient season for doing that, which if it be not done before he die, he must perish everlastingly.

We have these two things then in this good Example to imitate. 1. His *Consideration.* 2. His *Reformation.* The later of these is the sure way to God and Blessedness; but we are never like to come into it, but by the former. And therefore I shall commend this, in the first place, to all that have a desire to be safe. Concerning *Consideration,* I shall shew, 1. What it is. 2. What are the Evils of Inconsideration. 3. What chiefly causeth the neglect of it. 4. What are the things we should consider.

## SECT. I.

### *What Conſideration is.*

DEſigning this Diſcourſe principally for the leſs-underſtanding ſort of People, I find it neceſſary, in the *firſt* place, to tell them, what is meant by *Conſideration*. And, I ſuppoſe, ſuch Perſons will beſt underſtand me, when I ſay, That to *conſider* a thing, is very *ſeriouſly* to *think* of it. I ſay, it is to *think* of it very *ſeriouſly*, as much as the thing deſerves to be thought of. To underſtand this more perfectly, let us enquire into two things.

1. What kind of things they are which deſerves our ſerious thinking on.
2. What kind of thinking it is that deſerves the name of *Conſideration*.

1. What kind of things they are which deſerve our ſerious thinking on. It is not every thing that deſerves to have a Man's ſerious Thoughts, or which can be thought worthy of his Care, and fit for him to buſie his Head much about. But the things which a Man ſhould ſeriouſly think upon, are ſuch things,

things, as we are wont to call *conſiderable things*; matters of ſome weight, and of ſome concernment to him one way or other; and eſpecially ſuch as are of greateſt concernment. They ſhould be ſuch as it may do one ſome good to think on; and the ſerious thinking of which, may make him the *Wiſer*, the *Better*, or the *Happier*. There are ſome things of ſo little worth or concernment to us, that they are not *worth* much thinking on; and there are ſome things ſo unintelligible to us, that it is to no *purpoſe* to think much of them; and there are ſome things that are ſo wholly above our power of ordering, that it can no way avail us to be much concern'd in our Thoughts about them. But there are, beſides theſe, things, whereof if we do not think much, we muſt needs be *Fools*, or *Wicked*, or *Miſerable*; and theſe ought to be much and ſeriouſly thought on. Yet ſuch is the vanity of our Minds, that we are apteſt to trouble our Heads moſt about thoſe things, the much thinking whereof brings us nothing but trouble and vexation. How happy were it for us, if we could never think of many of thoſe things, which our Thoughts do uſually run moſt upon! And in thinking whereof we waſte the far greater part of our Life, either to little, or to a bad purpoſe! It would

be our great eaſe, and advantage too, to think no more on theſe things, than only to conſider that they deſerve not, and therefore ſhould not have our ſerious Thoughts.

As any thing is of more or leſs *uſe* and *concernment* to us; as it may more or leſs conduce to make us *Wiſe*, or *Good*, or *Happy*; as the thoughts of it may more or leſs help us to live as we ought to do, in our *duty* to *God* or *Man* in this life, or to come to *Eternal Life* when we go out of this; ſo is it more or leſs to be ſeriouſly thought on. And in like manner, whatever things may make us *worſe* or more *miſerable*, and may be *hindrances* and *obſtructors* either of our *duty* or *happineſs*, are accordingly to the hurt more or leſs which they may do us, to be more or leſs made the Objects of our ſerious Thoughts: So that whatever things they be, that may not be either *uſeful* or *hurtful* to us, and the more or leſs ſo, as we either do, or do not think upon them, are to be look'd on as things not at all *conſiderable*; and therefore no more to be thought on, than muſt needs be, when they come into our Heads whether we will or no; and then are they to be thought on with all *indifferency* imaginable.

The things then that are of *concernment* to us, and for that *conſiderable*, are all ſuch as we

we may be *better* or *worſe* for, ſuch as God may be *honour'd* or *diſhonour'd* by; ſuch as may *help* or *hinder* us to *be good*, and to *do good* in this World; or may *prepare* or *unfit* us for everlaſting *Bleſſedneſs*. Hence the concerns of the *Soul* are more to be thought on than the concerns of the *Body*; *Publick* concerns more than *Private*, relating to this World only; *Spiritual* and *Heavenly* things more than things *Carnal* and *Earthly*; *Eternal* concerns more than *Temporary*; and *God*, who is infinitely above all, and whoſe both *Honour* and *Favour* is of nearer concernment to us than all things, is to be thought on more than all things. Such are the things which moſt deſerve our ſerious thinking on.

2. Let us now ſee, what kind of thinking it is, that can deſerve the name of *Conſideration*. Or, how are theſe *conſiderable* things to be thought upon ſo, as that we may be truly ſaid to *conſider* them. It is certain, that every ſort of *thinking* is not to be accounted *conſidering*. We have all of us a thouſand rambling thoughts of many things, which we take ſo little into conſideration, that we can give very little account how we came to think of them; and often can hardly remember that we did ſo at all. Whilſt we are awake always, and ſometimes when

we are aſleep, our Heads are full of thoughts, which are very buſie, or rather playing, even whether we will or no, about a multitude of little things, which we never thought worth one hours conſideration. As in a Market-crowd a Man may ſee a hundred Faces, and give every one he meets with a ſlight *Good-morrow*, or a *How-d' you*; and he hath ſome thoughts (ſuch as they are) of every one, and yet takes no farther notice of them, theſe being Perſons he is not then concern'd with. His buſineſs which brought him thither, is the only thing he thinks of then in good earneſt; So moſt of the things we think of, we do but *remember* at moſt, or *occaſionally* and *accidentally* they come into our minds; but as they come, ſo they go; Like to a thing that paſſeth by us in haſte, we ſee it as it paſſes, and think but very little of it; but as we loſe the ſight of it, ſo do we the thoughts of it too; and are no more concern'd about it, than as if we had never ſeen it, or as if there had never been ſuch a thing. The thinking of a thing which may be call'd *Conſideration*, is a *deſigned, concern'd, leiſurely, ſerious* and *thorough* thinking of it.

1. It is a *deſigned* thinking, with a full purpoſe of mind to inform our ſelves better about it; a ſummoning up of our thoughts,

and

and a diligent ſetting them on work. It is not a thought that a Man hits on by chance, and which ſtays with him a while, tho' he never intended it; but that which is ſought, choſen, and invited. As 'tis ſaid, *Pſal.* II. 2. *The kings of the earth ſet themſelves, and the rulers take counſel together.* So a Man muſt *ſet* himſelf to conſider, to adviſe with, and take counſel of his own Reaſon. This is an uſual thing with moſt Men in any great Difficulty or Danger which they apprehend, to ſet themſelves to think and contrive what courſe is fitteſt for them to take. Neither will any wiſe Man neglect this. And why ſhould not we *ſet* our ſelves to *conſider* and *contrive* for our ſafety, who meet with daily ſo many difficulties in our way to Heaven, and are in ſo great danger to come ſhort of it?

2. It is a *concerned* thinking, as about that, the near and great concernment whereof to our ſelves we are very ſenſible of. We often think of things without any reflection on our ſelves, as upon matters that no way touch us. But we are not apt to be very ſerious about them, unleſs we apprehend our ſelves ſome way or other concerned in them. When *David* had determined evil againſt *Nabal*, *Abigail*'s Servants deſired her to *conſider well* of it, 1 *Sam.* XXV. 17. *Now therefore*

*fore know and conſider, what thou wilt do; for evil is determined againſt our maſter, and againſt all his houſhold.* She was to think of it as a matter that concern'd the Safety and Welfare of her ſelf and Family. And thus the *Pſalmiſt* ſpeaking in God's Name to the wicked, *Pſal.* L. 22. *Now conſider this, ye that forget God, leſt I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver.* If we will paſs our time in Peace and Comfort, we muſt not forget, but think much and very *concernedly* of God; conſidering well what it lieth us upon to live conformably to his Will, that we may never fall under his diſpleaſure.

3. It is a *leiſurely* thinking, a taking time to view and obſerve a thing exactly, together with all its circumſtances, its conveniences or inconveniences, and all the evils or goods which attend it. Sudden Thoughts little deſerve the name of Conſideration. It is a laying things in order in our thoughts, with a deſign to conclude from them what may be, or ought to be done or expected by us. *Conſider of it, take advice, and ſpeak your minds,* ſay the *Iſraelites* one to another in the *Levites* caſe, *Judg.* XIX. 30. And ſo ſaid *Elihu* to *Job, Hearken unto this, O Job, ſtand ſtill, and conſider the wondrous works of God,* Job. XXXVII. 14. There is implied in it, *Firſt,* A preparing

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the Mind for it, by awakening it, and ſtirring it up from the bed of ſecurity, and an unthinking temper; ſuch as the mind of habitual Sinners is even always in, in relation to Spiritual things, and of Eternal concernment. *Riſe up Balak, and hear*, ſaid *Balaam* to him, *Num.* XXIII. 18. Put the Mind into an attentive and conſidering poſture. And then, *Secondly*, A laying aſide all other buſineſs which may diſturb our thoughts, or interrupt them; ſhunning all diſtracting or diverting Objects, ſilencing all troubleſome Affections and unruly Paſſions; Give the Mind leave to do its own work; It muſt not be let to run at random upon other things, it muſt not be diſturb'd by any Paſſion, nor confounded with any throng of Buſineſs, but there muſt be Calm within, and a Quietneſs round about it: *Commune with your own hearts upon your bed, and be ſtill*, ſaith *David*, Pſalm IV. 4. We muſt reſolve to be deaf to the World, and our own Luſts, if we will conſider to purpoſe the things that belong unto Eternity.

4. It is a *ſerious* and *earneſt* thinking; we muſt not be in jeſt, or indifferent in a matter of ſuch weight and importance, that requires our greateſt intention, care and diligence, no leſs than Eternal Life or Death depending on the reſult of our Thoughts and Self-conſultations.

ſultations. Trivial matters may be ſlightly thought on, but matters of moment call for ſerious Debates. And hence Conſideration is uſually expreſs'd by ſuch words as import a *ſeriouſneſs*. God, 'tis certain, becauſe of his Divine Perfections, needs not to conſider of any thing; yet when he is ſpoken of in *Holy Scripture*, as obſerving the behaviour of Men, in order to Reward or Puniſhment, as tho' he were conſidering of them, he is ſaid to *Weigh, Ponder, Examine, or Try*, &c. *The Lord weigheth the ſpirits*, Prov. XVI. 2. *He pondereth the hearts*, Prov. XXI. 2. *The ways of man are before the eyes of the Lord, and he pondereth all his goings*, Prov. V. 21. *Doth not he ſee my ways, and count all my ſteps?* Job XXXI. 4. And the wiſe King, ſpeaking of the Arts of the *ſtrange Woman* to entice a Man, ſaith, They are to divert him from conſidering; *leſt he ſhould ponder the path of life*, Prov. V. 6. 'Tis ſaid of the Bleſſed Virgin *Mary*, that *ſhe kept all theſe things, and pondered them in her heart*, Luke II. 19. συνετήρει, ſhe preſerved and kept them ſafe together in her Memory; συμβάλλουσα, conferring and diſputing within her ſelf about them. And of the *Scribes* and *Phariſees* we read, *Mark* II. 6. that they were διαλογιζόμενοι ἐν τῇ καρδίαις, reaſoning in their Hearts; diſcourſing within themſelves,

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as tho' two Perſons had been in their Breaſts diſcourſing *Dialogue-wiſe* the one with the other. It was an excellent Precept which *Pythagoras* gave to his Scholars, *Sleep not till thou haſt run over in thy mind all thy works of the day paſt, and ask thyſelf, Whither have I gone? What have I done? What have I left undone?* Conſideration is a Man's *poſing* himſelf, *examining* his Heart, *adviſing* with his own Reaſon very ſeriouſly. It is a *bethinking ones ſelf*, 1 Kings VIII. 47. *A laying a thing to heart*, Iſaiah LVII. 1. *An applying ones heart to a matter*, Hag. I. 5.

5. It is a *thorough* thinking, leaving nothing unthought on, neither ceaſing to think on, till one come to the end of thinking; that is, to a right *underſtanding* of the matter, and a ſtedfaſt *reſolution* about it: It is ſuch a *reaſoning* and *diſcourſing*, as bring one to his *Concluſion* and final *Determination*. Otherwiſe all is to no purpoſe, and a Man hath nothing but his labour for his pains, and had as good never have begun, as never come to an end. *Reſolution* is the end of *Conſideration*, and *Practice* of *Reſolution*. And herein lies all practical *Wiſdom* or *Prudence*, Not *raſhly*, *inconſiderately* and *blindly*, and at all Adventures to ruſh on, whatever it is we have a mind to do; or which way ſoever our natural Inclinations and Affecti-

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ons would carry us; but to *conſult* with our Reaſon, and be well *adviſed* in all things, *deliberating* and *debating* the matter well with our ſelves, and with calm and ſerious Thoughts, rationally concluding what is beſt to be done, and how it may be done to good purpoſe. A thinking on ſome few things relating to a buſineſs, is not enough, but all *conſiderable Circumſtances* are to be *thoroughly* pondered. Nothing is to be left out of our Conſideration, which may alter the caſe in hand, or hath any weight in it, which may turn the Scales either the one way, or the other. The *nature* of the thing what it is, *neceſſary* or *unneceſſary*, *profitable* or *hurtful*, *weighty* or *light*, *lawful* or *unlawful*, *expedient* or *inexpedient*: the *ends* and *uſes* of it, the *arguments perſuading* to it, or *diſſuading* from it; the *rules* and *meaſures* whereby all is to be regulated, the *agreement* with, or *ſwerving* from ſuch rules; the *benefits*, *advantages* and *gains* on the one ſide, and the *dangers*, *diſadvantages* and *loſſes* on the other; the neceſſary *preparations*, *helps*, *inſtruments* and *encouragements*; together with the *difficulties*, *hinderances* and *diſcouragements* that we may meet with; and the *ways* and *means* of removing or overcoming them; and whatever elſe may have any influence upon the matter to be conſidered. Thus whatever the

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things be which fall under Conſideration, whether they be *paſt*, *preſent*, or *to come*, Conſideration is ſuch a *deſigned*, *concerned*, *leiſurely*, *calm*, *ſerious* and *thorough* thinking on them, and an *inward reaſoning*, or a *mental diſcourſing* about them, and about all things pertaining to them, as may help us to order all things prudently, and to the beſt advantage; ſo as we may reap as much good, and ſuſtain as little hurt by every thing as may be. That whatever we do, or whatever befals us, may as little hinder, and as much promote our happineſs, as it is in our power to make it; and that if we cannot keep our ſelves from all evil or hurt, yet at leaſt we may not do any thing to make our ſelves miſerable

By what hath been here ſaid, we may underſtand, what that *Inconſideration* is, which God complaineth of, and is indeed the ſin of a great many. It is a *careleſs* and *unthinking* temper of Mind; and they who are of this temper, venture boldly, raſhly, and unadviſedly upon any thing, as it falleth in their way; never inquiring how pleaſing or diſpleaſing it may be to God, or what it may bring upon themſelves in the end. They review not what is paſt, to find out wherein they have erred or offended, and what ſtands in need of mending, or blotting

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out, and undoing again by *Repentance*. They think not wiſely on what they go about at preſent, to obſerve its fitneſs or unfitneſs to be attempted, or to do it by a right rule, and to a right end, and to take care that they neither do any hurt, nor loſe their labour. They think not providently on the future, what either *muſt* or *may* come, ſo as to prepare and provide as they ought for it, but are without either fear or forecaſt. And what the evil of this is, I am next to ſhew.

## SECT. II.

### *The Evils of Inconſideration.*

IT is ſo viſible to all the World, that *Inconſideration* is a very ill thing, that in the moſt common concerns and affairs of this Life, there is hardly any one that ſeems not very ſenſible of it. There are few *Tradeſmen*, or *Husbandmen*, or *Artificers*, how mean a Trade ſoever they drive in the World, but they are aware of it: And all ſeem ſatisfied, that nothing can ordinarily ſucceed well under our hands, and that there can be ſmall hopes of thriving by what we undertake,

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if we do not wiſely conſider of it. If an unconſidering Man ſpeed well, 'tis only by chance; and it's not above once or twice, it may be, in a hundred times; and few Men are willing to venture any thing they prize, upon the ſucceſs of ſuch blind and giddy doings. Men therefore, in all matters of moment, ſet themſelves ſeriouſly to think, what they have to do, and to what end they do it; how it is to be done, and what helps they ſtand in need of, and how to have them; what letts and rubs there are in their way, and how they may be removed; what they may hope for, as the fruit of their care, skill, and induſtry; and what they may fear, as the conſequent of their negligence, ignorance, idleneſs, or any miſcarriage. If any one do not conſider theſe things, Men count him a Fool; and every one is ready to read his Fortune for him, and ſay, He is not like to thrive. *Which of you* (ſaith Chriſt, *Luke* XIV. 28, 31.) *intending to build a tower, ſitteth not down firſt, and counteth the coſt, whether he have ſufficient to finiſh it? Or what king going to make war againſt another king, ſitteth not down firſt, and conſidereth whether he be able with ten thouſand to meet him that cometh againſt him with twenty thouſand?* What Husbandman goeth to plow, and ſitteth not down firſt, and conſidereth whether

his Ground be in good heart, and like to bear any burden; whether the Seaſon be proper for his work, and all his Inſtruments in good order; whether his Oxen be tractable, and in good plight; and his Servants well vers'd in the work they go about; whether his Seed be ſound, and himſelf of ſufficient Ability to manage all to good advantage. So wiſe are the Men of this World in their Generation for their worldly ends, that they think not fit to venture all at random without due conſideration. And ſhall we be ſo fooliſh as to imagine, that the great buſineſs we are to do, to ſecure unto our ſelves a bleſſed Eternity, ſhould either deſerve or require leſs conſideration, than the things which relate to our ſhort continuance in this World only? Let the miſcarriage we are guilty of in our worldly concerns be what it will, the evils which we incur by it will ſhortly have an end; and we ſhall no more remember them: But if we miſcarry in the buſineſs we are now to do for Eternity, it is that which draws after it evils both endleſs and intollerable. And this is enough of it ſelf to rouze us up to the conſideration of theſe things. An affright will often bring a Man to ſerious Thoughts, when nothing elſe will; And can there be any thing more terrible, than a proſpect of

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Eternal Torments? But this is not all the evil of *Inconſideration*, tho' it be that which is moſt apt to awaken the *Inconſiderate*. I do no more but mention it now, in hope that the fear of being everlaſtingly miſerable, which will certainly be the end of unconſidering People, bringing us to ſome degree of ſerioufneſs, we may be capable of diſcerning other great evils in it, ſuch as are theſe following:

1. Not to conſider the things on which our Eternal State depends, is not to behave our ſelves like Men, but to act quite contrary to our Nature. *Reaſon* is a thing Eſſential to *Man*, and only Man, of all inferior Creatures, is able to make this uſe of it; I mean, to *conſider* things. To this end is it given us, and if we make not this uſe of it, we had as good have been without it. *Trees* and *Plants* grow, and bear Fruit; but they cannot conſider how they do ſo, nor what they do. *Beaſts* and other *Animals* live and move, eat and drink, and do ſuch things as are agreeable to their Nature: But they *conſider* not, they do not *deliberate* within themſelves about their Actions, or their Ends; but are carried on by their Senſes, and a natural Appetite, without pondering of Circumſtances, and debating in their Breaſts what is moſt fit or unfit to be done, or what

is like to follow upon the doing or omitting of any thing. Only *Man*, of all earthly Creatures, hath *Reaſon* and *Underſtanding*, and thereby is fitted for *deliberating*, *conſulting*, and *diſcourſing* things over within himſelf, and for *contriving*, *forecaſting*, and *ordering* all he doth to good ends and purpoſes. And if he doth not make this uſe of his Underſtanding and Reaſon, he acts contrary to the *Nature* which God hath given him. Yea, and in effect, he ſeems to impute *Vanity* and *Impertinency* to the *All-wiſe God*; as tho' he had given him ſo noble a Faculty, as *Reaſon* is, in vain, and for no uſe at all; For what elſe is the uſe of *Reaſon*, but *Conſideration?* If a Man may act like a Beaſt, without Conſideration, why ſhould not God have made him like a Beaſt too, without Reaſon? If any ſay, We have the important Affairs of this Life to conſider, and this is to uſe our Reaſon well: I readily grant it; but deny withal, that this is either all the uſe, or the chief uſe for which our Reaſon was given us. Had God made us for this World only, and if there were nothing for us to enjoy, or to ſuffer, but in this ſhort Life; the uſe of our Reaſon might well be confined to things of this preſent World and Life. But ſeeing God has deſign'd us to be Immortal, and hath made our Life on Earth

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to be but a time of Probation, and Preparation for Eternity; to uſe our Reaſon either *only*, or *chiefly* about the Affairs of this World, is as unnatural an abuſe as we can make of it. Can there be any thing more againſt Reaſon, than to think it was given us to conſider leaſt, the things that are moſt conſiderable? And can there be a more unreaſonable thing, than to conſider more how we may make a ſhift to ſpend a few Days here upon Earth, than how we may be ſure of living an Eternal Life of Happineſs with God in Heaven? Nay, to what purpoſe ſhall we conſider what to do in this World, and how to make the beſt Advantage of it for the very ſhort time that we are to continue in it; if in the mean time, we conſider not, what ſhall become of us when we go out of it, nor how to improve our being in this World, ſo as to ſave our ſelves from being Eternally miſerable in the World to come, when ever we depart hence, which may be, for ought we know, the very next moment? If *ſelf-preſervation* be that which all Men naturally deſire and aim at, it muſt be moſt of all things againſt Nature, to conſider leaſt the things whereby we may be *Eternally preſerved* from the Torments of Hell-Fire, and in a State of Everlaſting Joy and Bleſſedneſs. Certainly, if God have given us

Reaſon for any thing, it muſt be *chiefly*, and above all things, for this; To conſider how we may beſt Serve and Honour Him, and promote our own Eternal Happineſs. If we do not make this uſe of our Reaſon; it will be hard to ſay, what advantage we have by our Reaſon above the moſt Unreaſonable Creatures: For Beaſts have leſs Trouble without Reaſon in this Life, than men have with it. And had men the ſame *end* that beaſts have, and there were nothing at all to be conſidered, but what concerns this Life; poſſibly it had been better for the World, if all men had had as little Reaſon as they; for all the good it ſeems to do, is to make men more Senſible of their own Miſeries, and more able to make others Miſerable. Without this uſe of Reaſon, what difference can there be betwixt us and Mad-men? The greateſt difference between a man that is Sober, and one that is Mad, ſeems to be this; That the one hath the right uſe of Reaſon, and the other hath loſt it: The one Acts Conſiderately, and the other Raſhly without conſideration. And certainly he is the maddeſt of all Mad-men, whatever he conſiders as to this Life, that runs laughing into Hell-fire, never conſidering what he ſhall endure there. Such an *Unnatural* thing is it for men to lead an *Inconſiderate* Life.

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2. Without *Serious Conſideration*, all the means of Happineſs, which God hath been Graciouſly Pleas'd moſt Plentifully to afford us in CHRIST JESUS, are loſt upon us, and we can have no benefit by them. None of the *means* of *Grace* and *Salvation*, which are given us of God, work on the hearts of men, as *Plaiſters* and *Salves* do upon their bodies, whether they think of them or no. But all theſe things work *morally* by our *conſideration*, and *mental application* of them. The *Word* of God affects not the Heart, nor works any change in the man, by being *heard* alone, but by being *conſidered*. Read the *Scripture* a thouſand times over, whatever we may *know* or *remember* more, yet ſhall we not be made *better* by it without *conſidereng* it. The *Sacraments*, how often ſoever received, Seal no good at all unto us, if they be not *conſidered*. The things that were ſpoken of *Paul*, had had no more Operation upon *Lydia*'s heart, than they had upon many of the hard-hearted *Jews*, if the Lord had not opened her heart to *attend* unto them, and *conſider* them. The *good ſeed* falling into the *good* and *honeſt* heart, is therein Cheriſhed by *conſideration*, and ſo it brings forth Fruit. Therefore ſaid St. *Paul* well, *Conſider what I ſay, and the Lord give thee underſtanding in all things*, 2 Tim. 2. 7. Whatſoever

ſoever methods God uſeth to bring us to Happineſs in Himſelf, he brings us *firſt* to *Ourſelves*, with the *Prodigal* Son in the *Parable*, *Luk.* 15.17. He awakens us ſome way or other to a Serious Conſideration, or all will be loſt upon us. His *Word* and *Sacraments*, his *Judgments* and *Mercies*, nor any thing elſe, hath any effect upon our Souls, unleſs it be to the greater hardening of our Hearts, without ſetting our thoughts on work about them. And this is the Reaſon why notwithſtanding the abundance of Means we enjoy, ſo few are Sanctified and Saved.

3. The want of *Conſideration* makes all that ever we do, even our moſt *Religious Exerciſes*, all our moſt *Charitable Deeds*, and whatever is by God's *Command*, or in its own *Nature* otherwiſe good and profitable to men, altogether *unprofitable* to us, and *Unacceptable* to God. God always expects from us a *reaſonable Service*, and a *Spiritual Worſhip*, ſuch as is ſuitable both to *His* Nature and *our own*; which we can never give unto him, without much Serious Conſideration. All things, even to our very *Eating* and *Drinking*, or whatſoever elſe we do, muſt be done to the *Glory* of God, 1 *Cor.* 10. 31. All our Thoughts, Words and Actions, muſt be regulated, as well as we can, by the Rule of his Commandments: and this is certainly a thing

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impoſſible to be done, without a very ſerious exerciſing of our mind about every thing. Therefore did God reject as an *Abomination* and a *Wearineſs* to him, all the *Sacrifices* and *Religious Worſhip* of the *Jews*; and whatever they did to Honour him by; becauſe they did all in a *formal* and *cuſtomary* way, not *conſidering* the *ends* and *ſignifications* of them; nor the *qualifications* requiſite in the Worſhippers to render them Acceptable, *Iſa.* I. And our Bleſſed JESUS hath aſſured us, that all our *Faſtings*, and *Alms*, and *Prayers*, ſhall loſe the reward Promiſed, as often as they are done without due *conſideration* of the right *end* and *manner*, *Matt.* VI. 1, *&c.* Now what a wretched condition is that man in, all whoſe Addreſſes to Heaven, and all whoſe good deeds on Earth can do him no good? And ſuch is the caſe of every *unconſidering* perſon.

4. Through *Inconſideration* it is, that all *Temptations*, even ſuch as had we our Wits about us, we would be aſhamed to be foiled by, prove too ſtrong for us, and have power enough to draw us from our Duty into Sin. A weak Child may kill a Man that's faſt aſleep. A very little thing in a man's way, will give him a fall, that minds not where he ſteps: And he whoſe reaſon is aſleep, or buſie about impertinencies, is eaſily ſurpri-

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ſoever methods God uſeth to bring us to Happineſs in Himſelf, he brings us *firſt* to *Our ſelves*, with the *Prodigal* Son in the *Parable*, *Luk.* 15.17. He awakens us ſome way or other to a Serious Conſideration, or all will be loſt upon us. His *Word* and *Sacraments*, his *Judgments* and *Mercies*, nor any thing elſe, hath any effect upon our Souls, unleſs it be to the greater hardening of our Hearts, without ſetting our thoughts on work about them. And this is the Reaſon why notwithſtanding the abundance of Means we enjoy, ſo few are Sanctified and Saved.

3. The want of *Conſideration* makes all that ever we do, even our moſt *Religious Exerciſes*, all our moſt *Charitable Deeds*, and whatever is by God's *Command*, or in its own *Nature* otherwiſe good and profitable to men, altogether *unprofitable* to us, and *Unacceptable* to God. God always expects from us a *reaſonable Service*, and a *Spiritual Worſhip*, ſuch as is ſuitable both to *His* Nature and *our own*; which we can never give unto him, without much Serious Conſideration. All things, even to our very *Eating* and *Drinking*, or whatſoever elſe we do, muſt be done to the *Glory* of God, 1 *Cor.* 10. 31. All our Thoughts, Words and Actions, muſt be regulated, as well as we can, by the Rule of his Commandments: and this is certainly a thing

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impoſſible to be done, without a very ſerious exerciſing of our mind about every thing. Therefore did God reject as an *Abomination* and a *Wearineſs* to him, all the *Sacrifices* and *Religious Worſhip* of the *Jews*; and whatever they did to Honour him by; becauſe they did all in a *formal* and *cuſtomary* way, not *conſidering* the *ends* and *ſignifications* of them; nor the *qualifications* requiſite in the Worſhippers to render them Acceptable, *Iſa.* I. And our Bleſſed JESUS hath aſſured us, that all our *Faſtings*, and *Alms*, and *Prayers*, ſhall loſe the reward Promiſed, as often as they are done without due *conſideration* of the right *end* and *manner*, *Matt.* VI. 1, *&c.* Now what a wretched condition is that man in, all whoſe Addreſſes to Heaven, and all whoſe good deeds on Earth can do him no good? And ſuch is the caſe of every *unconſidering* perſon.

4. Through *Inconſideration* it is, that all *Temptations*, even ſuch as had we our Wits about us, we would be aſhamed to be foiled by, prove too ſtrong for us, and have power enough to draw us from our Duty into Sin. A weak Child may kill a Man that's faſt aſleep. A very little thing in a man's way, will give him a fall, that minds not where he ſteps: And he whoſe reaſon is aſleep, or buſie about impertinencies, is eaſily ſurpri-

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zed by any little Temptation. It's no hard matter to beguile one that is *careleſs* and *ſecure*, and never thinks himſelf in any danger of being *deceived*. It would not be ſo eaſy, as moſt of us find it to our coſt, for many of thoſe *Temptations* whereby we are daily overcome, to prevail againſt us, had we our Eyes always open to ſee what they are, and what reaſon we have to withſtand them. Would we ſeriouſly think with our ſelves, how little it is that the Temptation promiſeth, and how much leſs it performeth; how little we ſhall gain, and how much we ſhall loſe by yielding; we would even ſcorn to be ſo ſoft, as to be wrought on by moſt of thoſe things, whereby we are now without much ado drawn into the vileſt Sins. Why doth the *Young man* ſo eaſily yield to the *flatteries* and *enticements* of the Impudent *Whore*, *Prov.* VII. but that he goes on without conſideration? *He goeth after her ſtraightway, as an ox goeth to the ſlaughter, and as a fool to the correction of the Stocks.* V. 22. *As a bird haſteth to the ſnare, and knoweth not that it is for his life.* V. 23. *Whoſo is ſimple* (ſaith *the fooliſh woman*) *let him turn in hither: and as for him that wanteth underſtanding, ſhe ſaith to him, Stolen waters are ſweet*, &c. *But he knoweth not, that the dead are there; and that her gueſts are in the depths of hell*, Prov. IX. 16, 17, 18.

That

That *Inconſideration* giveth the greateſt ſtrength they have to moſt Temptations, is very plain from thoſe *Excuſes* men are wont to make for themſelves when they have Sinned. What is it which they commonly plead for themſelves but this, *That they did not think it to be a Sin; That they hoped there had been no great evil in what they did; If they had thought there was ſo much evil in it, they would not have done it?* Now if they ſpeak truly, 'tis plain that they had not been tempted but through *Inconſideration*. And indeed it is hardly imaginable, how the number of wicked People ſhould be half ſo great as it is, were it not for this, that they *conſider* too little what they do. We cannot think that in a *Chriſtian Church* people ſhould live many years, and yet never hear of the things which are daily taught therein; and yet theſe are enough, one would think, to make them fearful to live Wickedly, and to arm them ſufficiently againſt all Temptations, were they duly conſidered. When we hear how ſtrictly a moſt *Juſt*, *Good*, *Almighty*, and *Omniſcient* God hath forbidden all Wickedneſs upon pain of *Eternal Damnation*; and how the ſame *Great* God hath Commanded Holineſs, and encouraged us to it with the Gracious *Promiſes* of *Pardon* for all paſt Sins, and *Acceptance* of *Weak*, if Sincere, endeavours

vours and performances of Duty through JESUS CHRIST, and for his ſake of the reward of *Eternal Life*: How were it poſſible for us, for the ſake of a little *ſhort* and often *filthy* Pleaſure; for the *ſhadow* of Honor, or for a little *dirty* and *uncertain* Wealth, and all but for a very few Days, to venture upon Sin, did we ever conſider things Seriouſly? No, we ſee it, that when men are at any time awakened into ſerious conſideration by ſome ſharp *Affliction*, by an apprehenſion of ſome great and imminent *Danger* or *Sickneſs*; they can *deſpiſe* all theſe Temptations, and *reſiſt* them; and if when the Danger, Fear, or Pain is over, they are again enticed by the like Baits, 'tis only becauſe through their *eaſe*, their *conſideration* is fallen aſleep again. So plain is it, that the greateſt advantage that any Temptation can have over us, is that which we give it, by not conſidering things as we ought to do.

5. Nothing more certainly ruines us eternally, than *Inconſideration*, and that both becauſe it keeps us in *Ignorance*, and hinders us from that *Exerciſe* of *Grace*, which by Faith in CHRIST JESUS ſhould bring us to Heaven.

Inconſideration holds us *ignorant* both of *God* and *our ſelves*; and ſo never well underſtanding, becauſe never throughly conſider-

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ing what we hear and read, what we ſee and feel, the Goodneſs and other Attributes of God; our obligations to him, and dependance on him on the one ſide, nor our own needs, our weakneſs and miſerable condition, when our ſelves alone, on the other ſide; we ruſh on blindly and boldly, and the more *blindly* always the more *boldly* too, fearing nothing, becauſe we ſee nothing; and ſeeing nothing, becauſe we will not open our eyes to ſee and conſider what lies plain and viſible before us. *A prudent man foreſeeth the evil and hideth himſelf, but the ſimple paſs on and are puniſhed*, Prov. XXII. 3. *A wiſe man feareth and departeth from evil, but the fool rageth and is confident*, Prov. XIV. 16. *They conſider not that they do evil*, Eccl. V. 1. *The harp, and the viol, and wine, are in their feaſts; but they regard not the work of the Lord, neither conſider the operation of his hands*, Iſa. V. 12. *They conſider not in their hearts, that I remember all their Wickedneſs*, Hoſ. VII. 2. *The ox knoweth his owner, and the aſs his maſter's crib; but Iſrael doth not know, my people doth not conſider*, Iſa. I. 3.

Again, *Inconſideration* hinders all thoſe *Exerciſes* of *Grace*, whereby through Faith in CHRIST, we might eſcape Death, and be prepared for Life Eternal.

Who

Who can *Repent* of the Sins which he hath not duly Conſidered, with all their aggravations? He that examineth not himſelf often, he that never reviews his Converſation, nor inquires into the temper of his own Heart, is like to prove a ſorry penitent. He that conſiders not the *Law* of God, knoweth not wherein he hath *Tranſgreſſed*; and he that conſidereth not his own *Life*, cannot lay his Sin to Heart. He that thinketh not much both of the vileneſs and danger of his Sin, will hardly bring his heart to be ſorry for it, or to hate it. Whilſt we are ſecure and careleſs how we ſpend our days, what can be expected, but that we lie ſtill in our Filth, and hold on confidently Diſhonouring God to our own Deſtruction? *I hearkned and heard* (ſaith God) *but they ſpake not aright; no man repented him of his wickedneſs, ſaying, What have I done? Every one turned to his courſe, as the horſe ruſheth into the battel*, Iſa. VIII. 6.

Who can have any Comfort in his life paſt, that conſiders not how he hath ſpent it, whether Sinfully and Vainly, or Virtuouſly and Piouſly? Who can chear up his Soul in God, and rejoyce in the Lord? Who can arm himſelf againſt the Terrors of Death, and in hope expect the great Judgment to come; who never yet caſt up his account, nor conſidered what he hath been doing all his days,

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nor how far he is run in arrear with God? How ſhall an unconſidering man ever be able to ſay with St. *Paul*, Acts XXIII. 1. *I have lived in all good conſcience before God unto this day*? Or as he again, 2 Cor. I. 12. *Our rejoicing is this, the teſtimony of our Conſcience, that in ſimplicity and godly ſincerity we have had our converſation in the world?*

Who can be thankful to God for all the Mercies he hath received, and all the wonders of his Goodneſs vouchſafed to him in all the parts of his life, that hath not conſider'd them well? Who can improve the Bleſſings of God to God's Honour, and the good of himſelf and others, that ſeldome thinks of them? What obligations to God can we be ſenſible of in all the great things which he hath wrought for us, whilſt we mind them not?

How can we live and act any otherwiſe but looſely and irregularly, running headlong into all wickedneſs, and upon any danger; ſo long as we conſider not what a God we have over us, and what Rules he hath given us, and how much we are concerned to obſerve them? For want of conſidering it is, that we do all things at random, without any regard to the *Ends* or *Conſequents* of our Actions. Our *Love*, our *Fear*, our *Deſire*, our *Hope*, our *Truſt*, our *Obedience*, are all miſ-

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placed; we keep to no *Rules*, nor tye our ſelves up to any *Laws*; we omit our Duties to *God*, our *Neighbours* and our own *Souls*: we commit things *abominable* and *hurtful*; *diſhonourable* to God, and *deſtructive* to our ſelves; moſt *unbeſeeming* both our *Nature* and our *Profeſſion*; againſt our own comfort and happineſs; we conſume our *Time* in *Idleneſs*, *Folly*, and *Vanity*, becauſe we Conſider not for what we live, nor whoſe we are, nor what we are to account for: And by all this we loſe our *Hope*, and *Confidence*, and *Aſſurance*, and all that might ſtand us in any ſtead, in the Hour of Death, and Day of Judgment. *O that we were wiſe, that we underſtood this, that we would conſider our latter end!* Deut. 32. 29.

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## SECT. III.

### *The* Cauſes *of* INCONSIDERATION.

HAving ſeen ſome of the *Evils* of *Inconſideration*; we will, if we be wiſe, labour to be cured in time of ſo dangerous a diſtemper; but this will not be done, unleſs the *Cauſes* of it be removed. Let us therefore next inquire into theſe, and endeavour to put them away. Amongſt others, we are eſpe-

eſpecially to take notice of theſe which here I ſhall point out.

1. The firſt is *Ignorance*: For I doubt not but many would conſider more than they do, if they knew either *What* to conſider, or *How* to conſider, or what it *lieth them upon* to conſider. But alas! we may to as good purpoſe bid a blind man ſee, or a deaf man hear, as exhort an *ignorant* man to *conſider* any thing at preſent, but his Ignorance. *Conſideration* is the exerciſe of *Knowledge*, and the improving of it to *practice*; but no man can exerciſe what he hath not: *A brutiſh man knoweth not, neither doth a fool underſtand this*, Pſal. 92. 6. Therefore *the way of a fool is right in his own eyes*, Prov. 12. 15. becauſe he knoweth no better. *Ignorance* therefore muſt be removed in the firſt place, that a man may be able to conſider: And yet, tho this in many may be the cauſe of *Inconſideration*, theſe many are but few in compariſon of thoſe who have eyes and ſee not; who know, and yet conſider as little as if they knew nothing. We muſt therefore ſeek out other Cauſes of this Evil.

2. And the next I ſhall name, is *Preſumption*; which I take to be as common a Cauſe of *Inconſideration*, as any other whatſoever. Men generally preſume too much upon their

Skill and Knowledge, and are too confident to ſee their need of Conſideration. And there is a manifold *Preſumption* which cauſeth a neglect of due Conſideration.

A man, as but now was ſaid, may preſume too much of his own *Knowledg*, and *Wiſdom*, and *Dexterity*, as one that is ſo ready and expert in the right management of his Affairs, that he can do all things off-hand, without any puzzling thoughts about it: Now *there is more hope of a fool*, than of one that is thus *wiſe in his own conceit*, Prov. XXVI. 12. The greateſt Miſcarriages in the world are owing to a *conceited* and *confident Ignorance*, and a *Preſumption* of a man's own *Wit* and *Underſtanding*, thinking himſelf too wiſe and knowing, to take Advice of others; and ſcorning to ſeem ſo dull, as to need much conſulting with his own Reaſon.

A man may preſume too much upon the *Eaſineſs* of the Work he hath to do, and take the way to Heaven to be ſo open, and plain, and ſafe, that he needs not be at the trouble of much enquiry and circumſpection in his walking. He may imagine God requires no ſuch accuracy and ſtrictneſs in framing our whole Converſation by his Laws, as the more ſcrupulous ſort of men do think. There needs not, ſaith he, ſo much ado about the buſineſs of Salvation, that a man muſt be always

ways buſying his mind about it. We have a round of Duties to run, and when we have done that, all's done: As tho God did conſider as little as we are apt to do; *He hath ſaid* to God *in his heart, Thou wilt not require it*, Pſal. X. 13.

One may preſume, *That all is well with him already*, and that he hath already made his *Calling* and *Election* ſure: He hath already got, as he thinks, into the right and ſure way, and hath no more to trouble his head about, but only to go on the ſame way ſtill, without any further thinking of it: *There is a way that ſeemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death*, Prov. XIV. 12.

Some may poſſibly preſume, *That they do conſider things well enough*; even when they never have any ſuch thought of them, as can deſerve to be call'd Conſideration. Now and then, it may be, they think a little of the things that ought to be conſidered; and it would be ſtrange if they did not, when they are ſo often put in mind of them; but alas! that *thorough weighing* and *pondering* of things in their minds, which before was ſhewn to be Conſideration, they are mere ſtrangers to, and never once went about it. And in this vain confidence, of having done what they never in earneſt endeavour'd to do, they paſs their time without conſi-

dering, till conſidering can do them no good.

Others preſume, *That they have day enough before them*, and they will conſider of it ſometime before night. They will, and they will, but they will not yet; becauſe they preſume it will be time enough to do it anon; and it is always too ſoon, till it be quite too late. And thus through a fooliſh preſumption of one thing or other, many of us are kept from conſidering, till there be nothing left us to conſider, but this one ſad thing, That we have loſt our opportunity; 'tis now too late, and Conſideration is become a great part of that Torment, which it ſhould have prevented.

3. Another Cauſe of *Inconſideration*, is our long *neglect* of conſidering, and an *unthinking Habit* of Mind. Hence Conſideration, when we are call'd to it, is an uncouth thing to us; and we have been ſo long ſtrangers to it, that we know not how to come acquainted with it, nor how to entertain it. We have uſed our ſelves to another courſe a great deal more eaſie, and have got a cuſtom of doing things inconſiderately. We do as we have been bidden to do by others, or as we ſee others do, or as our own Inclinations and Affections lead us to do; but we have not been uſed to think for our ſelves, what is rational or

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our duty; what is lawful, or what is fit, and becomes or behoves us to do. We go down with the ſtream of cuſtom or inclination, and we ſlide ſmoothly and pleaſantly away; but we have not been wont to conſider to what purpoſe we do ſo, or into what Gulfs we may be carried, or how we ſhall get out again. When we have been, it may be, the greateſt part of our age accuſtomed to act all things like children, to ſuffer our thoughts to run looſely, wildly, and rovingly without check, we know not which way to get them together again, or to fix them in ſerioufneſs upon any thing, nor how to get into any method of Thinking; hence it is very uneaſie to us to conſider, and we are ſoon weary of it.

4. Another Cauſe therefore of our continuing inconſiderate, is our *Sloth* and *Lazineſs*. We cannot endure the pains of confining our Thoughts to the things which ſhould be conſidered; and the leſs can we away with it, becauſe this would, as we conceive, abridge us of much, not eaſe only, but liberty and pleaſure too, which we have been wonted to, in thinking on every thing that we have moſt mind to, or on any thing that falls in our way. To tye up our thoughts to rules, to reſtrain them within a certain compaſs, to direct them to a certain mark, is a task of too much trouble to moſt of us: Eſpecially Spiritual

and Eternal things afford the Senſual man no delight at all, they are very melancholly ſubjects, and he is ſoon weary of them. It requires much pains and attention of mind, to drive away thoſe wanton and frolick thoughts, which our Luſts and Vanities commend unto us, and are always ſending in to diſturb us. And who of a thouſand, eſpecially if *young* and *lively*, hath patience to endure this?

5. There is alſo another Cauſe, and that not uncommon, of Inconſideration, which is, An *Unwillingneſs to ſee our own ſins in their own colours*. Every conſidering perſon muſt needs quickly diſcover his own *Filthineſs*, *Shame*, and *Guilt*; and not theſe only, but the great *danger* he is in becauſe of his ſins: And we had moſt of us rather be blind, than ſee ſuch a melancholly and frightful ſight. Alas! Such a ſight would mightily diſturb us, and break off our ſweet ſlumbers, ſpoil our pleaſant dreams, and make us a terror to our ſelves. Our Conſciences would be thus awakened, and fly angrily in our faces, and be continually reproaching us with our folly and wickedneſs. This moſt of us are apt to look upon as a very *uncomfortable*, and even an *intolerable* condition; and therefore madly chuſe to venture all, and to go on quietly, with ſleeping Conſciences that cannot check

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us, tho we drop unawares into Hell by doing ſo; than by Conſideration to awaken them, and endure their rebukes, tho we can no otherwiſe be ſafe, and arrive at Eternal Bleſſedneſs.

6. The laſt Cauſe of Inconſideration I ſhall mention, is our *buſying our ſelves too much other ways*, ſo that we grudge our ſelves time and leiſure to conſider. Our thoughts are almoſt conſtantly otherwiſe engaged, and cannot break looſe from ſuch things as have got the maſtery and command of our affections. With *Martha* they are troubled about many things, and hardly ever at leiſure for the *one thing neceſſary*. What one of a hundred of us, makes *Religion* his buſineſs? We account the matters of the world our buſineſs, that calls for Seriouſneſs; and *Religion* a thing only now and then to be thought on a little by the by; and when we have nothing elſe to do, or rather are forced to it. Or 'tis, if a buſineſs at all, only like that of dreſſing our ſelves on ſome certain days, a little finer than ordinary; a *Feſtival* or *Holidays* work, little better than a Play. Now what we make our main buſineſs, is always the thing that we moſt conſider, be it never ſo trivial and needleſs: To dreſs our meat daintily, to fit faſhionable Cloaths on our Bodies, to beautifie our Houſes at home, and viſit our idle Neighbours

abroad; this we can make our buſineſs, conſider, and contrive, and often break our ſleep to think how all may be done moſt modiſhly, and with the beſt grace for our credit: But the buſineſs of *Religion*, as tho it were a matter to be done, as they ſay, with a wet finger, it's enough to think of it when the Bell rings, or it may be, when we are indiſpoſed for company, and have a mind to be alone, and can think of nothing elſe to divert our ſelves with. And this thoughfulneſs about all things elſe, even tho of leaſt concernment, is one main cauſe why ſo few conſider the things that belong to their Everlaſting Peace.

If then we will root out the *Cauſes* of this Evil Diſeaſe, we muſt take care in time, to furniſh our ſelves with a competent ſtock of Divine *Knowledg*; we muſt paſs the time of our ſojourning here in *fear*, and beware of *Preſumption*. and an ill-grounded *Confidence*; we muſt apply our ſelves to learn the *Art* of conſidering, and accuſtom our ſelves to *Seriouſneſs* and *ſerious Company*; we muſt ſhake off *Sloth* and *Lazineſs*, and watch againſt all *Sin*, which makes us afraid to know our ſelves; and laſtly, We muſt not plunge our ſelves too deep into worldly *buſineſs*; and we muſt lay aſide all needleſs *curioſity*, and affectation of *modiſh vanity*. In ſhort, We muſt labour to underſtand, that the buſineſs

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of ſerving God, and ſaving our Souls, is a thing of nearer concernment to us, than all other buſineſſes whatever: and reſolve to make it ſo; and then be ſure it will be conſider'd accordingly, and our *moſt ſerious thoughts* will be employ'd about it.

## SECT. IV.

### *What things we are to Conſider.*

WHEN we are ſenſible of the *Evils* of *Inconſideration*, and underſtand the *Cauſes* of it; no more can be needful to teach us either *why*, or *how* we are to avoid it. And certainly we can need no motive to practice any thing, which we know it is ſo neceſſary for us to practice, that if we do it not, we muſt be eternally miſerable. Suppoſing therefore, that enough hath been ſaid to convince us, that Conſideration is altogether neceſſary; Leſt any one ſhould be at a loſs how to find out fit matter for it; I ſhall now point out to him ſome few of thoſe things, which ought principally to be conſidered; and for want of conſidering whereof, our lives are generally ſo unanſwerable to our Profeſſion, and ſo diſpleaſing to Almighty God.

Now

Now whatſoever things it hath pleaſed God, in much goodneſs and mercy to *reveal*, and make known unto us, in relation either to his own *Honour*, or to our *Salvation*, we muſt needs acknowledge to deſerve our very ſerious conſideration. For to this end hath God *revealed* them to us, that they may be *conſidered* by us, and by conſideration have that influence upon us, which they ought to have. That knowing God, we may glorify him as God; and knowing our ſelves, we may behave our ſelves like men; that is, like the rational Creatures of God, to whom he hath given Reaſon and Underſtanding to know our dependance on him, and our duty to him.

Wherefore hath God been pleas'd to reveal unto us the Hiſtory of the *Creation* of the World, and of his admirable *Providence* over it in all the Ages of it, but that we might *know* and *conſider* the work of his Hand, and the method of his Government; that we might ſee his Infinite *Power*, and *Wiſdom*, and *Goodneſs*; his *Truth* and *Purity*, his *Juſtice* and his *Mercy*: whom we are to *praiſe* for our being and ſubſiſtence; to whom we are to *pray* for needful ſupplies of all our wants; whom we are to *ſerve* and *obey*, and in whom we are to *truſt* and put our *confidence*; and to whoſe will and order-

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ing we ought to *submit*, and *resign* our selves?

Wherefore hath God been pleas'd to reveal unto us so many *Divine Truths* in his Word, concerning his own *Nature*, and his gracious *Designs* for us, the Eternal State of *Happiness* provided for us, and the *Methods* he is pleas'd to use to bring men into it through the *Redemption* and *Mediation* of JESUS CHRIST, and by the *Illumination* and *Sanctification* of the HOLY GHOST; but that we might *understand* and *believe* these things; and *considering* them wisely, bring our selves to an humble and thankful *compliance* with all his gracious Designs for our blessedness, wherein he delights to be glorified?

Wherefore hath God given us so many holy *Precepts* and *Rules* of living; but that we should *learn* them, and *consider* them, and rule our whole Conversation by them?

Wherefore hath he made so many Gracious *Promises* to the Faithful and Obedient, and *Threatned* such terrible things to unbelievers and wicked persons? Wherefore hath he executed such severe *Judgments* on the stubborn and rebellious; and shewn such *Mercy*, and given such *Deliverances* to the humble and penitent? Is not all this done, to the end that we should diligently *observe* and *consider* all these things; and by his *Promises* and

*Mercies*

*Mercies* encourage our ſelves in his Worſhip and Service; and by his *Menaces* and *Judgments*, learn to ſtand in awe of him, and tremble to offend him?

Indeed there is nothing in God's *Word* or in his *Works*, but calls for our Serious Conſideration; and we can never do our Duty, or come to the Bleſſedneſs we deſire, without a due conſidering of them. But that which I would here do, is to ſhew and point out ſome ſpecial matters of Conſideration, which it chiefly concerns us, even daily, to bear in mind, and to exerciſe our thoughts upon; Such as theſe.

1. *That we are not our own, neither is any thing at all abſolutely ours*: But we are his who made us, and placed us here; and all things in the World, who ever poſſeſſeth and enjoyeth them, are always *His*. It is *God that made us, and not we our ſelves*; therefore, *we are his people, and the ſheep of his paſture*, Pſal. C. 3. Yea, will ſome ſay, who knows not this? Indeed we all either do, or may know it; but alas! Who Conſiders it? I fear hardly one of a hundred. The careleſs and diſſolute Lives of a great many, tells us very plainly, That whatever they know of this, they *Conſider* it not. If we ſend our Servants into the Field to labour for us, and to do our work; and they do nothing

thing there but play and idle away their time, and after they are told of it again and again, they take no farther notice of it, but follow their old wont: Will we ſay, that they conſider whoſe Servants they are, and what they have to do? If we truſt them with our Money, and direct them how to lay it out for our uſe; and they game and drink it away, and give us no better account of it, but that they have ſpent it on their own Luſts and Vanities: Will we ſay, they conſider whoſe Stewards they are, and what their Duty is? Do ſuch Servants conſider, that they are not their own, and that the Money they have is not their own? How then doth that man Conſider that he is not his own, but God's, who Serveth not God but himſelf, and who waſteth what he hath on his own Sins, inſtead of improving it to God's Glory? If we will be kept within any bounds of Duty, or in the way to Life, this muſt be much in our thoughts.

The Reaſon why men take to themſelves ſo much liberty, as moſt of us do, is, becauſe we too little conſider, that we are God's Creatures and Servants. For want of Conſidering this, we live and do as we liſt, follow our own wills, and take our own pleaſure, as much as we dare for the Laws of man. Indeed we generally behave our ſelves,

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as if God had nothing to do with us or ours, and as if we had none to pleaſe but our ſelves, and men that have more Power than we. But if we would be Safe and Happy, we muſt take another courſe, and frequently think thus every one within himſelf. "Who made me "but God? Who placed me here on the "Earth but God? Who gave me what I "have but God? Whoſe am I, but the ſame "God's that made me? Whoſe work have I "here to do, but his who ſent me hither? "By whoſe Order am I to diſpoſe of what I "have, but by his who gave it me? Whoſe "Servant am I, but his who feeds me, and "who alone can Reward or Puniſh me? "And who feeds me, or can reward or puniſh "me, but he who is Lord of all things? "Whom have I to Pleaſe, but him whoſe "work I am to do? Whoſe work have I to "do, but his whoſe I am, and who can and "will call me to account? Whom am I to "Praiſe and Glorifie, but him, from whom "I and all things came, by whom I and all "things are preſerved? What am I to do "with my ſelf and what I have, but that for "which I was made, and for which all that "I have was given me? Whoſe Orders am I "to follow in ſpending my time, my eſtate, "my ſtrength of mind or body, but his "who hath committed all theſe things to my

"truſt?

"truſt? Who will call me to a reckoning "for all I have, and all I do, but he who "gave me all, and hath given me Rules "whereby to diſpoſe of all? Whoſe will am "I to do? Mine own, or his whoſe I am, "and who alone can make me happy? Who "can make me Happy, but he who made "me and all things? How then ſhould I "hope to be Happy, and not Miſerable, but "by Pleaſing and Honouring him in doing "his Will, and Obeying him in all things? O what a Reformation would ſuch a conſideration as this work in the lives of men! And unleſs we thus exerciſe our thoughts, we ſhall never learn to live like men.

2. Conſider, that as we are God's, and all we have is his, and his work it is which we are to do: So we *are* always, and *work* always under his *Alſeeing Eye*; and are to conſider, what that Great God is whom we Serve, and in whoſe preſence we always are. *The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good*, Prov. XV. 3. *All things are naked, and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do*, Heb. IV. 13. *The ways of man are before the eyes of the Lord, and he pondereth all his goings*, Prov. V. 21. O conſider this all you that forget God, becauſe you ſee him not! He always ſees you, and cannot forget you. If any thing will make a

Servant

Servant diligent in his buſineſs, and careful not to do amiſs, this will, That his Maſter is always with him; and he who will certainly either Reward or Puniſh him according to his deeds, has his eye conſtantly upon him, and nothing can be hid from him. This therefore we ſhould much Conſider, that where-ever we are, and whatever we are about, God is always with us, and ſees us. "Let eve-"ry one ſay to himſelf, I am now in the pre-"ſence of the Great God, whoſe I am; he is "now here with me, and hath his Eye upon "me, though I ſee him not; obſerving my "whole behaviour, and taking notice of all "my Thoughts, Words, and Actions; from "whomſoever I can hide them, I can never "hide any of them from him. I had need "therefore to take heed what I do, that all "may pleaſe him, that every thing may be "right in his Eyes, and ſuch as he approveth "of. For he is a moſt *Holy* God, *of purer "eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on "iniquity*, Hab. I. 13. *The way of the wicked "is an abomination to the Lord*, Prov. XV. 9. "He is an *Almighty* and moſt *Powerful* God, "and is able to caſt *both ſoul and body into hell*, "Matt. X. 28. *He, even he is to be feared, and "who may ſtand in his ſight, when he is angry*! "Pſal. LXXVI. 7. He is a moſt *Juſt* God, "and the *Righteous Judge* of all the World.

*He*

"*He will not at all acquit the wicked*, Nah. I. 3. "Seeing this moſt *Holy*, *Powerful* and *Juſt* "God is the Judge of all, and will render to "all according to their works; and ſeeing the "ſame God who is to judge us, is always "a preſent eye-witneſs of every thing that we are to be judg'd for; certainly nothing can more deſerve our Conſideration than this; and no other conſideration can more over-awe us into a due carefulneſs to do always ſuch things as we are ſure are acceptable to him.

3. A third thing that we are much to Conſider is this, That nothing in the World but a *ſincere Holineſs* of *heart* and *life*, can pleaſe this moſt Holy and Alſeeing God. *Without holineſs no man ſhall ſee the Lord*, Heb. XII. 14. *Bleſſed are the pure in heart, for they ſhall ſee God*, Mat. V. 8. O how little is this Conſidered by the generality of men! How few have this in their thoughts, *That to cleanſe our ſelves from all filthineſs of fleſh and ſpirit, and to perfect holineſs in the fear of the Lord*, is the very work that the *Promiſes* of God ſhould put us upon? Yet ſo it is, 2 *Cor.* VII. 1. and no otherwiſe can we ever hope to be made partakers of the Bleſſings promiſed. O that we would think well of this, and ſeriouſly conſider, if this be the buſineſs that we are continually a doing! If it be not, alas,

what is it that we live for? what are we all our life long a labouring for? What, is it the buſineſs of our lives, to make our ſelves Everlaſtingly Miſerable? Are we hard at work, as moſt of us are one way or other, to no better purpoſe, than to vex and provoke our Holy and Righteous God, and to heap up Wrath unto our ſelves, againſt the day of Wrath? O what pains do we take to undo our ſelves, when we know that nothing but we our ſelves can undo us! Whatever we are a doing, if this be not our chief work, *to perfect Holineſs*, the *one thing neceſſary* is ſtill left undone; and we have yet done nothing to pleaſe God, and ſo had as good been doing nothing at all; ſeeing we are toiling all our days, without any reaſon to hope that we ſhall be Happy, and reap any thing but bitterneſs from all our labour, when our days are ended. For *every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himſelf even as he is pure*, 1 Joh. III. 3. "O conſider it in good earneſt, for it is a mat-
"ter of moment! Shall we be ſo mad as to
"live to no other end, but to have time e-
"nough to make our ſelves intollerably
"wretched? How! ſhall we tire and wear
"out our ſelves, merely to deſtroy our
"ſelves? Shall we toil like Oxen in the dirt
"of this World, merely to defile our ſelves,
"and make our ſelves odious in the ſight of
"our

"our heavenly Father? Shall we trifle away "all our time in ſin, and folly, and vanity, to "this good End, That we may be the ſurer of "an eternity of Torments and Sorrow? Alas, "the World paſſeth away, and the Luſts "thereof, to which we enſlave our ſelves; "and we draw near to Hell, and the flames "which are unquenchable. Could we conſi-"der this, we would ſoon diſcern *what manner of perſons we ought to be, in all holy converſation and godlineſs*, 2 Pet. III. 11.

4. Conſider often what a *price* God Almighty has ſet upon us; how wonderfully he hath manifeſted his love towards us; and what great aſtoniſhing things he hath already done to make us happy in himſelf. The *Angels* of God, thoſe glorious and holy Spirits, *deſire to look into theſe things* (1 Pet. I. 12.) with admiration and delight: beholding therein the *manifold wiſdom of God*, Eph. III. 10. What more obliging courſe can we imagine God could have taken to bring Sinners in love with Him, and their own Happineſs? How could he teſtify his love and care of us more convincingly than he hath done? How many notable ways doth he daily exerciſe his loving-kindneſs towards us? Is nothing of this worth our ſerious Conſideration? No not this, that when by the breach of the *Firſt Covenant* we were faln under the Curſe; inſtead

ſtead of executing the judgment upon us which had been threaten'd, he was graciouſly pleas'd to make a *new one* with us, and a much eaſier too? Nor this, That when we had done enough to deſtroy our ſelves, rather than let us periſh, the moſt wonderful thing that ever was, muſt be contrived by Infinite Wiſdom to procure us a Saviour? Had we deſerved to die? God's own *eternal*, *only begotten*, and *beloved Son*, the *immortal God*, and *eternal Life*, muſt be brought into a capacity of *dying*, to redeem us. Were we become weak? *Omnipotence* it ſelf muſt be cloath'd with the *weakneſs* of our Nature, and in that bear our ſins and ſorrows. The *Creator* of all things muſt be *made man of a woman*; The *King* of the whole world muſt be *made under the Law, to redeem them that were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption of Sons*, Gal. IV. 4, 5. Are we ignorant, and wicked? The *Holy Spirit* of God muſt be ſent to be our *Teacher* and *Guide*, our *Sanctifier* and our *Comforter*. Have we, after all, need ſtill of bodily ſuccours and ſuſtenance, of wordly delights and refreſhments in our way to bleſſedneſs? Good God! what plenty and variety of all theſe doth he daily afford us! 'Tis plain, God would reſtrain us from nothing, but from doing our ſelves a miſchief. How often have-

have we broken his New Covenant of Grace, and ſinned againſt the greateſt of Mercies? And yet God ſpares us, and grants us time to repent in, and earneſtly invites us to be happy; and loads us with all encouraging Bleſſings, both ſpiritual and temporal, every day. O conſider all this, how wonderfully, how many ways, how often and long God hath ſhew'd himſelf gracious unto us in JESUS CHRIST! and *deſpiſe not the riches of his goodneſs, and forbearance, and long-ſuffering, not conſidering, that the goodneſs of God leadeth us to repentance*, Rom. II. 4.

5. Another thing which we ſhould daily be thinking on ſo long as we live, is our *Latter End*; how ſoon it may come, and what it is like to be. *O that they were wiſe, that they underſtood this, that they would conſider their latter end*, Deut. XXXII. 29. An *End* will come; and it ſeems ſtrange, that we ſhould all know it, and few of us conſider it to any purpoſe. We ſee every day in one or other, what is the end of all our Pleaſures, and Honours, and Riches, and every thing that we here delight in. All theſe are at an end when death comes; and it is coming, and at hand, none of us knows how near. We are ſure it cannot be very far off; and every day we are ſure it is nearer than it was the day before; and the longer we live, the nearer it is ſtill.

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And though all the things we are now ſo fond of, end in death, yet death will not make an end of us; for after death is the Judgment, when *we muſt all appear before the judgment-ſeat of Chriſt, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad,* 2 Cor. 5. 10. Neither is there an end of us then, but according to the Sentence which ſhall then paſs upon us, *Some ſhall go away into everlaſting puniſhment, but the righteous into life eternal,* Matth. 25. 46. Now did we ſeriouſly conſider this, that our End is like to have no end, but is an endleſs ſtate of Bleſſedneſs or Miſery, ſurely we would come a little ſooner to our ſelves, and learn the wit to ask our ſelves ſome Queſtions, ſuch as theſe. "What is it that I am a doing in this World? "What am I ſpending my time and labour "in? Am I ſure what my End will be? "Have I made my ſelf ready for a bleſſed "Eternity? I have been labouring for the "things of this World, as if I could never have "enough of them; and yet I muſt ſhortly "dye, and all I have laboured ſo hard for, will "be gone, and I ſhall carry nothing away "with me. I am continually caring for this "Body, and making a very Idol of it; my "buſineſs from morning to night is to feed "it, and to adorn it. And am I not a very

"fool

"fool for this? Muſt not this idolized Body "of mine by and by rot in the Earth? And "am I taking all this pains to entertain the "Worms? Who can dwell with Everlaſting "Burnings? And what care have I taken that "I may not? How ſtand my Accounts a- "gainſt the day of Judgment? Do I nothing "now but what I ſhall be able to anſwer for "then? Or have I blotted out by repentance "all that will not paſs then for good? O let "what will become of this World, which is "but for a moment; and of this Body, which "will quickly be all rottenneſs and putrefa- "ction; my great care, if I be not quite "mad, muſt be, by a holy and vertuous life "on Earth, to be fitted for an eternal glorious "Life in Heaven. My days conſume apace, "and when my Lamp of Life will be extin- "guiſhed, I know not. This day is here, "but to morrow's uncertain: 'Tis therefore "high time for me to live well, that I may "live for ever.

6. Conſider, as Holy *David* did, *Pſ.* CXIX, 50. and as we are often call'd upon to do, our own ways. *Thus ſaith the Lord of Hoſts, Conſider your ways*, Hag. I. 5, 7. A man's *ways* are his *thoughts, deſires, deſigns, delights, hopes, confidences, loves, fears*, or *hatreds*; all his *words* and *actions, callings, profeſſions, cuſtoms*; and in ſhort, his whole *converſation*

privately with himſelf, or abroad in the World. This it concerns us much to think upon; not as too many do, with delight and pleaſure in the very thoughts of their Sins, endeavouring thus when the act is over, to taſte over the pleaſure again in their thoughts of it, and to continue the guilt and reliſh of it as long as they can: neither muſt we conſider and contrive in our thoughts new ways of ſinning; how we may get into them, how we may walk on moſt ſecurely and moſt pleaſantly in them, or how we may compaſs our worldly, carnal and devilliſh ends by them: this kind of thinking on our own ways, is (God knows) too common; and many are ſo perfect in this art of conſidering their own ways, that they can hardly do any thing elſe. But this we are to conſider, That we walk by the Rule that God hath given us; that we carefully mind what we do, and how, and to what end we do it; and taking a review of our ways paſt, examine whether they be ſuch as God approves of. We ſhould be as vigilant over our ſelves, and have as cloſe an eye to all our doings, as a moſt wary *Maſter* or *Miſtreſs* are wont to have over their *Servants*, whoſe either *skill* or *faithfulneſs* they moſt ſuſpect. Every night it would well become us to call our ſelves to an account for all our doings, and let nothing eſcape us, if it be poſſible,

poſſible, without trial. Thus might we diſcern what our preſent ſpiritual ſtate and condition is, and whither the ways we now walk in, will bring us in the end. Would we indeed well conſider all our own ways, and obſerve well whether they be the ways of God, or the ways of the Devil and our own Luſts, and whither they tend, to life or death; it were to be hoped we ſhould ſee the World in time reformed, and the ways of Piety and Holineſs come in requeſt again. But alas! whilſt men conſider ſo little what they do, and live ſo careleſly and negligently, as tho their doings in this life had no relation at all to their future ſtate; or as if they had no God to give an account to of what they do; 'tis no wonder that ſo many run headlong to deſtruction in, the ways which they have choſen, and perſiſt in, without any conſideration, what they are, or whither they lead.

## SECT. V.

### *The* CONCLUSION.

HAving pointed out ſome few things very conſiderable, for the help of thoſe who have not been accuſtomed to this moſt neceſſary duty of Conſideration; I ſhall now conclude

conclude this Part with an earneſt Exhortation to it.

Let us all, as we love God and our own Souls, awaken our ſelves to this Work. Nothing can be of greater concernment to us, than the things we ought to conſider; and therefore we muſt be every way inexcuſable if we do not very ſeriouſly conſider them. Can it ſeem all one to us, whether we have a God over us, or none? Is it all one whether we be under his Government, or our own Maſters; under his power, or at our own command? Are we no way concern'd in God's Infinite Wiſdom, Power, Goodneſs, Juſtice, Faithfulneſs, Holineſs, his Providence, or his Laws? Are his Works and Word, his Bleſſings and his Curſe, his Favour and Diſpleaſure, his Mercies and his Judgments, all one to us? Can we be wholly unconcern'd whether he ſee us, or ſee us not; whether he regard, or neglect us? Can we think it all a caſe, whether we behave our ſelves towards him as Subjects, or as Rebels; whether he reward, or puniſh us? Is it no matter, whether we live like Men, or Beaſts; whether we uſe our Reaſon, or not; whether we do what we were made for, or act contrary to our Nature, and the ends of our Creation? Is it the ſame thing, whether we be holy or unholy; lovely or abominable in the pure

Eyes

Eyes of God? Can we be indifferent, whether God take any care for our Salvation, or none? whether we have a Saviour, or no Saviour; be reconciled to God, or at enmity with him? Is it all one to us what our End ſhall be, whether we ſhall be acquitted, or condemned in the day of Judgment? Whether it ſhall be then ſaid to us, *Come ye bleſſed, or depart ye curſed?* whether we ſhall for ever rejoice in Heaven, or burn in Hell? Makes it no matter, whether the time of this life be wiſely improved, or vainly waſted? whether we be fitted in time for mercy, or ſtay till it be too late? If none of all theſe things be of any concernment to us, then are they not worth our thinking on; neither are we our ſelves worthy of our own Thoughts; and it's no matter what becomes of us, whether we ſhall be ſaved, or damned. Nay, 'tis plain, we think not our Souls worth the ſaving. But if there be any weight in theſe matters, and if it be not all one to us, whether we be in Glory, or in Torment; then are theſe things well worth our ſerious conſidering; and it cannot be all one to us, whether we think much of them, or no. Our meat will not keep us from famiſhing, or alive, if we do not eat and digeſt it. No means of Salvation will keep us from periſhing, if they be not conſider'd. God's Word and Sacraments, his

his Judgments and Mercies, his Promiſes and Threatnings; all the Merits of Chriſt, and all the gracious Invitations of the Goſpel, and all the helps of the Miniſtry, are quite loſt unto us, without Serious Conſideration; and we go to Hell when Heaven is ſet open to us, for want of conſidering whither we are going.

How can we poſſibly excuſe our ſelves for this groſs neglect? It is no hard matter for one to think of himſelf, and his own Concerns. It is natural and unavoidable to us to think of ſomething; and is it not reaſonable then to think on ſomething to ſome purpoſe? When we cannot hinder our thoughts from being buſie, is it not fit we ſhould ſet them on work for our good? Can we excuſe our ſelves for not thinking moſt on the beſt things, which will do us moſt good? Can our own Conſciences acquit us, for not thinking how we may eſcape Eternal Miſery? Can any one pity us, or ſhall not we curſe our ſelves, if we periſh only for want of conſidering how we may be ſaved? Are the things which belong unto our Peace hid from us, ſo that we can have no thoughts of them? Hath not God laid them plain and open before us, ſo as he that runs may read them? Have we not yet well learn'd them? And can we excuſe our ſelves for ſuch a Sin and Folly? Have we no Teachers to inſtruct us? Have we no capaci-

pacity of learning? Have we no Eyes to ſee with, no light to ſee by? Are we forgetful? And have we not daily remembrancers of what we are ſo apt of our ſelves to forget? Alas! all comes to this at laſt; We are idle and negligent, we are ſturdy and obſtinate; we are wicked and perverſe; we take no delight in God; we care not for ſpiritual things. O how ſhall we then eſcape for neglecting ſo great Salvation?

Have we no Reaſon to conſider? Are we not in the greateſt danger by not conſidering? May we not be ſurprized by Death, before we have learn'd to live; by Judgment, before our Accounts be ready; by Hell-fire, before we ſo much as fear'd it? May we not be tempted out of the way to life, ere we are aware of it, by a thouſand temptations for want of conſidering? May we not fall aſleep, and ſleep on ſecurely, till all be in flames about us, and there ſhall be no eſcaping, nothing but terror and amazement? Good God! that nothing ſhould make us ſenſible of this danger, who are otherwiſe ſo apt to be afraid, even where no fear is! What, will we not be ſafe at ſo eaſie a rate as a little timely thinking of our danger!

What can ſweeten and ſmooth unto us all the ſour, rough, and melancholly paſſages of this life, and make them in any meaſure tolerable

lerable to us, but Conſideration? What is it that can ſtrengthen us either to prevent, or remove, or bear the croſs, and all afflicting Accidents; the Loſſes and Diſappointments, the Sickneſſes and Pains, the Griefs and Vexations of this Life, but Serious Conſideration? Such may any Man's Condition be in this World, that nothing in the World, but the conſideration of his own Integrity, of God's Love, and the Joys of Heaven, can give him the leaſt comfort or eaſe of mind. His whole refreſhment is this, That he is in the right, though it be a rugged way; that he ſhall ſhortly be at his Journeys end, and out of this uneaſie way, at home in his Father's Houſe, where he ſhall reſt in bleſſedneſs for ever. Nothing but this Conſideration can keep up his ſpirits, or prevent his fainting in the way. And ſhall we not, to make our life eaſie to us, and our burthen light, be at the pains of a few timely ſerious Thoughts?

Whether we will conſider or no, God doth always conſider us, and all our ways, and doings, and that in order to an Eternal Reward or Puniſhment. If God would not regard what we do, we needed the leſs to conſider what we do. Were it all one to God, how we live, and he made no difference between the Sheep and Goats, we ſhould need the leſs to conſider unto which

Flock

Flock we belong. But we know 'tis otherwiſe, *He numbers our ſteps, and watches over our ſins; our tranſgreſſion is ſeal'd up in a bag, he ſows up our iniquity*, Job XIV. 16, 17. Though we conſider it not in our hearts, he remembreth all our wickedneſs; our doings beſet us about, they are before his face; *Hoſ.* VII. 2.

The Devil and his Angels conſider us, and watch all opportunities, which our inconſideration makes them in abundance, to take us at unawares, and as it were faſt aſleep. When the Husbandman ſleepeth, then is the proper ſeaſon for the Enemy to ſow his Tares. When we are at reſt in our minds, ſecure, and conſider little; then is it Satan's opportunity to ſow the Seed of Wickedneſs in our Hearts. We muſt be on our watch againſt this devouring Lion, if we would not be devoured by him: and our only Security is Serious Conſideration.

O how much Miſery would a ſeaſonable conſidering of things prevent! Miſery, which will make us at length ſadly conſider, when it will be too late. Now Conſideration will do us much good, then 'twill do us hurt. When 'twill do us good, we will not conſider; when 'twill do us hurt, we cannot chuſe but conſider. O Folly of all Follies! What a madneſs is this, not to do to our comfort now,

now, what if we do not now, we muſt do hereafter to our ſorrow? What would the Damned in Hell now give, that either they had conſider'd when they would not, or could not now conſider when they muſt? Now Conſideration would prevent Hell-torments, then it will in a great part make them. Had the Rich Glutton conſider'd what he muſt endure in Hell, he would not have delighted in the way to Hell; thither he came becauſe he conſider'd not, that thither he was going; and that being there, no Conſideration could bring him back again. Yea, how many ſevere Judgments might we eſcape in this life, did we well conſider? *Theſe things haſt thou done* (ſaith God) *and I kept ſilence, thou thoughteſt that I was altogether ſuch an one as thy ſelf; but I will reprove thee, and ſet them in order before thine eyes. Now conſider this, ye that forget God, leſt I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver,* Pſal. L. 20, 21. What a folly is it to ſleep on, 'till God be forced by his Rod to awake us! But what a madneſs, not to awake when his Ro is upon us, but to ſleep on ſtill, till we awake in everlaſting Burnings!

PART

# PART II.

## THE SIN and DANGER Of Delaying REPENTANCE.

I Hope there hath been enough ſaid in the *former Part* of this Diſcourſe, to convince us of the neceſſity of *Serious Conſideration*; and if *Conſideration* be ſo very neceſſary, it is to this end, that we may live *well* here, and *happily* hereafter. It appears, by what hath been ſaid, that none but *ſerious*, *thinking*, and *conſidering* Perſons, can live well; and 'tis certain, that none, but they who live well, have any reaſon to hope, that they can die well, or that they can be happy after death. Therefore was it needful in the *firſt* place, we ſhould be put in mind of this important Duty, which is ſo generally neglected, and the neglect whereof

draws ſo great an Evil after it, as that of living only to diſhonour God, and to deſtroy our ſelves eternally. But now 'tis alſo as evident from all that hath been ſaid, that the deepeſt and moſt Serious Conſideration, even of the beſt and moſt conſiderable things, is but a great deal of trouble to no purpoſe; and indeed a very idle thing, if it bring us not to a ſtedfaſt *reſolution*, and a ſtrenuous *endeavour* to behave our ſelves, throughout the whole courſe of this life, ſo as may beſt pleaſe God, and moſt conduce to our own Eternal Happineſs. *Reſolving* is the end of *Conſidering*, and *Doing* is the perfecting of *Reſolution*. Without conſtant *practice*, 'tis neither *conſidering* nor *purpoſing* that will bring us to *bleſſedneſs*. To think much, merely for thinking's ſake, is juſt to as much purpoſe, as to think of nothing at all; a man may poſſibly become more *knowing* by it, but he is not one jot the *better*. If then we will improve our Conſideration to our advantage, we muſt take the ſame courſe, which, as we have ſeen before, *David* took; who no ſooner had *conſider'd*, but forthwith he *turn'd his feet unto God's Teſtimonies*; yea, he *made haſte, and delayed not to keep God's Commandments*. This muſt be the *fruit* of our *Conſideration*, if we conſider to any purpoſe. As the *Prodigal* Son in the *Parable*, Luk. XV. no ſooner *came to himſelf*, and conſider'd

consider'd things well; but straightway he *resolved* to return to his *Father*; and having *resolved*, away he went without delay: so are we to do, if we would be safe and happy; *considering* well, *repent* immediately of all our Sins, and without stop enter upon a new course of life. And this is the business of this *Second Part*, to shew the necessity of a *speedy Repentance*, and the absurdity of *Delaying* it. It is a work that requires all the haste that we can make, and admits of no delay at all. *First*, We cannot repent too soon. *Secondly*, We may defer Repentance till it be too late. These are the two things I shall now make very plain.

## SECT. I.

### *No man* can Repent *too soon.*

REpentance, is a *turning* from our own Sinful ways, into the ways of God's Commandments; out of the way of Death, into the way of Life; it is a *leaving off* to be bad, and a *growing* good: 'tis a *change* of the whole man for the better, both of the inward temper of his heart, and of the outward course of his Life and Conversation. And can it now be needful to prove, that this

cannot be done too ſoon? Can one too early get out of *danger* and be *ſafe*? Can one too ſoon begin to grow *Happy*? Need I uſe arguments to convince us, that one cannot make too much haſte to be a *good man*? And yet ſo ſtrangely bewitch'd and blinded are Sinners, ſuch an almoſt inncredible power hath Satan got over men, to blind their eyes, and darken their minds, that they dote on nothing ſo much as on their own *foulneſs* and *deformity*; and nothing is harder to convince them of, than that it is better for them to be *clean* than *filthy*, *well* than *ſick*, *good* than *bad*, *wiſe* than *fools*; *happy* than *miſerable*. Who would think, that a *Reaſonable* Creature ſhould be ſo *Senſeleſs*? And yet almoſt *all* the work, and I am ſure, the *hardeſt part* of that which the *Miniſters* of Chriſt have to do, is to make men ſenſible of this, *That a man cannot too ſoon be good*; the thing which I am now to ſhew; and ſhew it I can, but to make men ſee and believe it, is the work of *God alone*; and we muſt Humbly and Earneſtly in Fervent Prayer beſeech *Him* to do it; I mean to make us effectually *Senſible* of theſe three things.

1. *That we cannot too ſoon do, what is at all times our Duty to do.*

2. *That we cannot too ſoon do, what alone can ſet us in ſafety.*

3. *That*

3. *That we cannot too ſoon do that, without which our life is very uncomfortable.*

1. *We cannot too ſoon do that, which is at all times our Duty to do*; and there is no part of our life, how early ſoever it be, that it is not our duty to Repent in it, and keep the Commandments of God. What we cannot do ſooner than it is our Duty to do it, cannot be done too ſoon; and what it is our Duty always to be doing, cannot be begun too ſoon. We are always *Sinners*, therefore we cannot *Repent* too ſoon; becauſe it cannot be ſooner than we have *Sins* to be *Repented* of. Were *Repentance* no more, than what too many I fear take it to be, a *being ſorry that we have ſinned*; it could not be too ſoon; for ſo ſoon as we have Sinned, we have cauſe to be ſorry that we have Sinned; and we have all Sinned even from our Infancy: And ſo ſoon as we have Offended God, it is our Duty to be ſorry that we have Offended Him. Were it no more, but *a hatred of Sin, a confeſſing of it, or reſolving againſt it, yea, or any ſort of actual forſaking it, and begging God's Pardon for it*: nothing of all this could be done too ſoon; becauſe it is our Duty to do all this ſo ſoon as we have Sinned; and we have always had Sins to be *hated, confeſs'd, reſolv'd againſt, pardon'd and forſaken*. And yet, were this

all that is meant by *Repentance*, though we could not but confeſs it very *reaſonable*, that all this ſhould be done ſo ſoon as we are ſenſible that we are *Sinners*; yet I fear we ſhould not think it altogether *neceſſary*; but would rather flatter our ſelves, that it would be enough to do it in our laſt *Sickneſs*, or ſome few days or hours before we *die*; becauſe all this, if we have but ſo much *time*, and ſo much *ſenſe* and *underſtanding* left us as to think of it, may then be done; and I doubt not, but it is done by a great many, who yet do not Repent unto life, as will be ſhewn anon. But ſeeing Repentance is all this, and a great deal more than all this; even a *through change of life*, not for *death*, but for a *more Holy life*, and that, not in *Heaven*, but on *Earth*; ſeeing it is a *leaving of Sin*, not to do *nothing*, but to do our *Duty*; a *turning* from our own *wicked ways* unto *God's Teſtimonies*, and the *keeping of his Commandments*; it is a Duty, that we are always to be doing ſo long as we live, and can only be done whilſt we live; and is in great danger not to be done at all if it be not ſoon begun; and cannot be done too ſoon, becauſe the doing of it ſoon, even ſo ſoon as we can, is a part of the Duty. To make this plainer, let us *Firſt* briefly conſider what the Duty of *Repentance* is, as in the Holy *Scripture* it is deſcribed unto us; and

*Second-*

*Secondly*, what time the ſame *Scripture* directs us to, for the doing of it; and by both we ſhall eaſily perceive, that we cannot repent too ſoon; becauſe no ſooner than it is our Duty.

*Firſt*, Obſerve how the Duty of *Repentance* is deſcribed unto us in the Holy *Scripture*. *Ezek.* XVIII. 21. *It is a turning from all our ſins which we have committed, and a keeping of all God's Statutes, and doing that which is lawful and right.* And v. 31. *A caſting away from us all our tranſgreſſions, whereby we have tranſgreſſed; and making us a new heart, and a new ſpirit.* It is *an amending of our ways and our doings*, Jer. VII. 3. *A returning every man from his evil way, and making our ways and our doings good*, Jer. XVIII. 11. It implieth *a godly ſorrow* for Sin, yet that *godly ſorrow* is not *Repentance*; but *worketh repentance to ſalvation, not to be repented of*, 2 Cor. VII. 10. It implieth *a hatred of every falſe way*, Pſal. CXIX. 104. *A being aſhamed, and confounded for our own ways; a loathing our ſelves in our own ſight, for our iniquities, and for our abominations*, Ezek. XXXVI. 31, 32. *A confeſſing and forſaking our ſins*, Prov. XXVIII. 13. And yet all this is not the whole Duty of *Repentance*. But as we muſt *ceaſe to do evil*, ſo muſt we *learn to*

*do well* alſo, Iſa. I. 16, 17. We muſt both *eſchew evil, and do good*, 1 Pet. III 11. Neither is this to be thought a work, on which it may be enough to beſtow ſome *ſmall part* of our life, when it grows near to an end; for *Repentance* is thus expreſs'd, *Tit.* II. 12. *A denying ungodlineſs and worldly luſts, and living ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly in this preſent world.* Can we think the *Apoſtle* meant no more by theſe words, but that we ſhould do this for ſome *few years* or *days* of our *old age* before we die? Certainly no man can be ſo fooliſh as to think ſo; but rather, that even ſo long as we *live* in this *preſent World*, and whilſt we are a *looking* for that *bleſſed hope* mention'd *V.* 13. that is, ſo long as we live, we ſhould do this, as *Zacharias* clearly expreſſeth it, *Luk.* I. 75. *That we ſhould ſerve God in holineſs and righteouſneſs before him all the days of our life.* And *by patient continuance in well doing, ſeek for glory, and honour, and immortality*, Rom. II. 7. I am confident, that no body can now imagine, that ſuch a *Repentance* as in theſe places of Holy Scripture is commended to us, can be the work of a *dying man*, or that it is not work enough for one's *whole life*, how long ſo ever. However 'tis plain, that it is our Duty in all the ſeveral ages of life, and at all times whilſt we live, and therefore no point of our time can be too

ſoon

ſoon to begin it in; but every moment that we wilfully neglect it, we add to our Sins by leading ſo long an unholy life, contrary to the Command of God. But this will more fully be proved afterwards.

*Secondly*, Obſerve what *time* the ſame *Scripture* directs us to for the ſetting upon this Duty. And we ſhall hardly find, that it commends to us any other *time* but the *preſent*; there is no to *morrow*, that I know of, allow'd us to depend upon; not the leaſt countenance or encouragement to *procraſtination* or driving off to another time. *Therefore now, ſaith the Lord, turn ye even unto me*, Joel II. 12. *Now it is high time to awake out of ſleep*, Rom. XIII. 11. *Behold now is the accepted time, behold now is the day of ſalvation*, 2Cor. VI. 2. *To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts*, Heb. III. 7. *Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth*, Eccl. XII. 1. No part, no day of our Age too ſoon. We are always call'd upon to repent, *preſently, to day, juſt now*; and not told we may ſtay till to *morrow*, or bid to do it ſometime *hereafter*. Whenever therefore we are *called* to *repent*, and that is as ſoon ſoever as we are made to *underſtand* that we are ſinners, and that *Repentance* is our duty; then is it our duty to ſet about it; and to put it off longer, is a violation of our duty, and a new ſin; and therefore 'tis cer-

certain, we can never begin to repent too ſoon.

2. *We cannot too ſoon do that, without the doing whereof we can never be in a ſafe condition*; no man thinks he can make too much haſte to be *ſafe*: And nothing can be plainer than this, That we are never in a *ſafe condition*, till we be *ſincere Penitents*; therefore we cannot *repent* too ſoon, unleſs we can be *ſafe* too ſoon. Can any one think he hath too ſoon got out of the Lion's mouth, out of the ſnares of the Devil, and from the Borders of Hell? Can any one think it too ſoon to be within view of Heaven and Eternal Joys? Then indeed he may think it too ſoon to repent of his ſins, and walk in the ways of God's Commandments. Did we but really believe, and well conſider, That we are always in *danger* of *Eternal Deſtruction*; and every moment ready to fall into the bottomleſs Pit of *Fire* and *Brimſtone*, out of which there is no Redemption, ſo long as we go on in any of the ways of ſin; tho we had no *ſenſe* of our *Obligations* and *Duty* to God, and tho we had no *Love* to him, which ſhould conſtrain us to do any thing for his ſake; and leſt we ſhould be wanting in our Duty to him; yet one would think the apprehenſion of the *danger* we are in of *periſhing*, ſhould make us *afraid* to go on, and *fear* ſhould conſtrain us, for our own ſakes, to change our courſe of life,

life, leſt we ſhould be wanting to *our ſelves* and our own *ſafety*. Our Bleſſed JESUS, who came to *ſave* us from Death and Deſtruction, came to call us to *Repentance*, that we may be ſaved; that being the only door that God, for his ſake, hath opened unto us to *Salvation*. He himſelf it was that ſaid, *Except ye repent, ye ſhall all periſh*, Luke XIII. 3. And when St. *John the Baptiſt* ſaw the *Phariſees* and *Saddutes* coming to his *Baptiſm*, which was the *Baptiſm of Repentance*, he thus ſaluted them, *O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance*, Matth. III. 7, 8. Shewing them, That there is no other way of eſcaping the Wrath of God, which always burneth againſt ſin and wickedneſs, but ſuch a *Repentance* as brings forth the *Fruits* of Righteouſneſs. Till we unfeignedly Repent of our ſins, we are in a ſtate of ſin; and ſo long are we the *children of wrath*, Eph. II. 3. *The wrath of God is revealed from heaven, againſt all ungodlineſs and unrighteouſneſs of men, who hold the truth in unrighteouſneſs*, Rom. I. 18. Whilſt we know what is our Duty to God, and yet do it not, there are many ſtripes ready for us; and God hath declared both by many Threatnings, and by many Examples of his juſt Indignation, that his Wrath is kindled againſt us. *God*

*ſpared*

*ſpared not the old world, but ſaved Noah the eighth perſon, a preacher of righteouſneſs, bringing the flood upon the world of the ungodly. And turning the Cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into aſhes, condemned them with an overthrow, making them an enſample unto thoſe that after ſhould live ungodly*, 2 Pet. II. 5, 6. *They ſuffering the vengeance of eternal fire*, Jude 7. What *ſafety* can the *impenitent* Sinner promiſe himſelf, or whither will he fly, and take Sanctuary from the *Fiery Indignation* of provoked Juſtice and Omnipotence? Whilſt we preſumptuouſly continue in our ſins, *we heap up wrath againſt the day of wrath*, Rom. II. Our Sins cry aloud to the *Almighty*, for his Vengeance upon us. His Judgments hang over our heads, like the naked Sword over the head of the *Tyrant*, by a ſingle hair of Mercy; and if our ſins once break that, we are ſuddenly cut off from the land of the living. *God will wound the hairy ſcalp of ſuch a one as goeth on ſtill in his treſpaſſes*, Pſal. LXVIII. 21. For *God is angry with the wicked every day. If he turn not, he will whet his ſword; he hath bent his bow, and made it ready. He hath prepared for him the inſtrument of death*, Pſal. VII. 11, 12, 13. God hath made all things ready for the execution of his Wrath whenſoever it pleaſeth him; and no ſinner knoweth how ſoon God will ſmite him down

to

to Hell. If he ſtay yet a while longer, it is to give us time to repent; and if we repent not ere long, he is the mean while but whetting his Sword, and bending his Bow to its full bent, that whenever he pleaſeth to take his own time for it, his Sword may pierce deep, and his Arrow flye home, and wound mortally. Indeed he hath declared himſelf to be very *gracious*, and *ſlow to wrath*; and our own daily experience aſſures us that he is ſo; and this wicked uſe we are too apt to make of it, That by his *long-ſuffering* and *forbearance* we embolden our ſelves to ſin the longer, and to delay our Repentance, in hope of longer forbearance ſtill. Yea, *Becauſe ſentence againſt an evil work is not executed ſpeedily, therefore the heart of the ſons of men is fully ſet in them to do evil*, Eccleſ. VIII. 11. A ſtrange and moſt unreaſonable preſumption this, as tho a man could be the ſafer, the longer he abuſed God's Patience, and turn'd his Grace into wantonneſs, and even dared him to do his worſt. Oh that we would conſider how unadviſedly we act for our ſelves! how ill we conſult for our own *ſafety!* and what Fools we are to think we can be *ſafe*, whilſt we are provoking God by our Sins, and by this Sin eſpecially, of preſuming he will yet forbear us longer, becauſe he hath forborn much longer already than we deſerv'd. Not conſi-

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dering the *goodneſs of God* in his *forbearance and long-ſuffering, which ſhould lead us to repentance; after our hardneſs and impenitent hearts, we treaſure up unto our ſelves wrath againſt the day of wrath, and the revelation of the righteous judgment of God*, Rom. II. 5. How fooliſhly *ſecure* ſoever we may be in our ſinful courſes, yet certain it is, we are never *ſafe*. *Jonas* may *ſleep*, and fear nothing, but the Winds and Seas are not quiet for all that while; and he is in no leſs *danger* becauſe he thinks not of it. Whilſt we ſin, God's Anger is purſuing us, and we know not how ſoon it will overtake us. Seeing therefore we are never *ſafe* till we repent, we cannot repent too ſoon, unleſs it can be too ſoon to be *ſafe*.

3. *We cannot too ſoon do that, without which our life can never be comfortable to us.* *Comfort* is the very *life* of life; and a life without Comfort, is worſe than death. And truly a life of ſin is a life without any true Comfort at all; and falſe Comfort is not worth the having, unleſs it can be worth ones while to go laughing into the Fire of Hell, which never ſhall be quenched: We cannot therefore too ſoon repent, except we can think it too ſoon to lead a comfortable life: And that the impenitent ſinner can have no true *Comfort*, is plain enough from what

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was last consider'd, That he can have no *safety*; for certainly an *unsafe* condition is also a very *uncomfortable* condition; and I know not what can comfort him that sees himself every moment in greatest danger of perishing everlastingly. What? Can there be any place for *Comfort* in that man's breast, that knows himself to be at *Enmity* with God, and God to be incens'd *against* him? Can he find *Comfort*, who walks whereever he goes, under a full-charg'd Cloud of *Vengeance*, ready whenever God gives the word, to break upon his head? Can there be any *Comfort* in a *certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries?* And yet this is all he hath any reason to look for, who *sins wilfully, after he hath received the knowledge of the truth*, and holds on without *Repentance*, Heb X. 26, 27. Indeed we see it too often, That the most abominable Sinners can so *harden* themselves in Sin, that they grow *insensible* of their *danger*: And not only so, but they can find much *Pleasure*, too (such as it is) in serving their lusts; nay, and whilst they do so, can flatter themselves with a foolish conceit that all's well enough with them. And just so may a man in a *swoon*, or in any *stupifying Disease*, be *insensible* that he is in danger of death; and a man in his *sleep*, may not perceive that the House over

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his head is on fire: Yea, he may have many *pleaſant Dreams* in the midſt of his danger; and a *Mad-man* may take pleaſure in his *madneſs*, and yet he's as mad as he, that thinks ſuch a *Pleaſure* to be a *Comfort*. Such a *comfort* may an *impenitent Sinner* have in his wicked life, whilſt his ſins keep him too buſie to think of his danger. But whenever he ſhall begin to think ſeriouſly, (which ſuch a one is very unwilling to do, and which unwillingneſs of his is a manifeſt ſign that he can find nothing *Comfortable* in his preſent ſtate, elſe would he be more willing to think of it) he will find his pleaſure quickly vaniſh. Let him apprehend himſelf in preſent danger of *dying*, and let him think whither *Death* is about to convey him, and what he can plead if he ſhall be called to the great *Judgment*; and then even his *uncertainty* of what ſhall become of him, or what he ſhall find in another World, will ſoon detect the vanity of all his preſent *Comforts*. But now on the other ſide, how ſweet and pleaſant are the thoughts of that happy perſon, who hath repented unfeignedly of his Sins, and walks before God in the ways of his Commandments with a perfect heart! He lives in a conſtant *friendſhip* with the *Father of mercies*, and *God of all conſolation*; with the *Bleſſed* JESUS in whom he is reconciled unto the *Father*: and who hath ſaid unto

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his Diſciples; *Ye are my friends, if ye do whatſoever I command you*, John XV. 14. Hence was *Abraham* called *the friend of God*, Jam. II. 23. Now ſaith *Chriſt*, *I ſay unto you my friends, Be not afraid*, Luke XII. 4. This is the *penitent* man's *comfort*, he is at *peace* with God, *and there is no condemnation to them that walk not after the fleſh, but after the ſpirit*, Rom. VIII. 1. Yea, he hath this comfortable Promiſe, *v.* 28. *All things work together for his good.* Were there no more in it but this, That the *Penitent* is freed from the fear of Eternal Puniſhment, and that his Sins are forgiven; that he is free from the ſtings and ſmartings of a guilty Conſcience, which is now purified and healed; certainly this alone is ſo great a *comfort*, that no man of any ſenſe can think he can get too ſoon into ſuch a condition. Is it not an exceeding *comfortable* thing to a man, that he can go about his honeſt *buſineſs*, or lawful *refreſhments*; and quietly, after all, betake himſelf to his *reſt*, without the angry rebukes of his own Conſcience, and without any dreadful apprehenſions of God's being diſpleaſed with him? Is it not very *comfortable* to be confident of God's *love* and *favour*, of his fatherly *bleſſing*, and of his ſpecial *care* and *providence*? Is it not very *comfortable* to be able in the *Pſalmiſt*'s words, *Pſal.* IV. 8. to ſay

after all the hard labours and troubles of the day paſt, *I will both lay me down in peace, and ſleep; for thou, Lord, only makeſt me dwell in ſafety.* Let it thunder and lighten, let the winds blow, and the waves beat, let all the World be in tumult and confuſion, the *Penitent* is got into his ſafe Harbour, his ſtrong Tower, his inviolable Sanctuary. Let mens Tongues be whetted like Swords, let the Devil and his ſuborned Tools bring thouſands of Calumnies and falſe Accuſations; his own *Conſcience* ſtill acquits him, and *his rejoycing is this, the teſtimony of his conſcience, that in ſimplicity and godly ſincerity he hath had his converſation in the world,* 2 Cor. I. 12. Let dangers and Enemies encompaſs him round about on all ſides, his God is his Protector; and *who,* ſaith he, *can hurt me, if I be a follower of that which is good?* 1 Pet. III. 13. *Nothing can ſeparate me from the love of God which is in* CHRIST JESUS *my Lord,* Rom. VIII. 39. Finally; So long as he lives, he can *rejoice in hope of the glory of God*; yea, and *glory in tribulation alſo,* Rom. V. 2, 3. And when he comes to dye, he can without any diſturbance take leave of this World, and triumph over Death; ſaying, *O death! where is thy ſting? O grave! where is thy victory? Bleſſed be God who hath given us the victory through* JESUS CHRIST *our Lord,* 1 Cor. XV. 55, 57.

XV. 55, 57. *I have fought a good fight, I have finiſhed my courſe, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteouſneſs*, 2 Tim. IV. 7, 8. Is it now poſſible that any one can make too much haſte to get into this *comfortable* Condition? No man that conſidereth aright his *Duty*, his *Safety*, or his *Comfort*, can think it at any time too ſoon to repent.

## SECT. II.

### *The* Sin *of* DELAY.

THough it can never be too *ſoon* for a Sinner to repent of his ſinful courſe of life; yet I dare not ſay that it can never be too *late*; a man therefore cannot make too much *haſte*, becauſe he knows not whether any other time after this, will not be too *late*; and becauſe the longer he *delays* it, the more cauſe he hath ſtill to fear that it will be ſo. Indeed every *delaying* of this Duty is ſinful; and therefore look how long it is *delay'd*, ſo much always in *one ſenſe* it is too late; becauſe it was not *ſo ſoon* as it ought to have been, or not *ſoon enough* to prevent a Sin. It hath been already proved, that it cannot be done *ſooner* than it is our duty to do it; be-

cauſe it is our duty *at all times*, and we ought always to be doing it: and therefore, if it be delay'd at all, we do it later than in duty we were bound to do; and that's *too late* in reſpect to God's Command. It hath alſo been proved, that it cannot be done *ſooner* than it is our *intereſt* and near *concern* to do it; becauſe we can never be *ſafe*, nor enjoy any true *comfort* till it be done; and therefore again, if it be *delay'd* at all, it comes *later* than we ſtood in need of it, and that's too late in reſpect to our own welfare. God, all the time we *delay* it, wants his right, the honour due unto him; and we all the while loſe much good, our ſafety and comfort; and ſo in both reſpects it is *too late*, if it be at all *delay'd*. But now, it may be be *too late* too (I will not ſay in a *worſe*, but to us) in a *ſadder ſenſe*; that is, we may drive it off ſo long, that it will be *too late* to repent at all, and till there be neither time nor power left us to repent; and what will become of us then? How long any one may delay his Repentance before it be too late in this ſenſe, no man living can tell him: And therefore whoſo is wiſe, will not delay his Repentance at all. Of this I ſhall ſay more afterwards: at preſent, I ſhall endeavour to make us all a little more ſenſible of the *ſinfulneſs* of *delaying*, and driving off our Repentance, and the keeping

ing of God's Commandments, from day to day; how contrary it is to all *Scripture* and *Reaſon*.

And truly this *delay* is ſo contrary to both theſe, that it ſeems very wonderful, how any one ſhould not be *aſhamed*, as well as *afraid* to uſe it. There can be nothing in the World more *abſurd*, than for a man at once to profeſs he believes the *Goſpel*, and owns the duty of *Repentance* as neceſſary; and to *delay* this duty: for this *delay* ſeems no leſs than a bold attempt to cancel and blot out the whole *Goſpel* at one daſh, and to change the order and method which God hath preſcribed for the bringing of Sinners to Salvation, for a new one of our own contriving. It ſeems, I ſay, the making of a *new Goſpel* for our ſelves, and a new way to Bleſſedneſs, which God never approved of, nor allow'd. And is not this as *abſurd*, as to ſet our ſelves in our Saviour's ſtead, and a taking upon us to make for our ſelves a *new* and *eaſier* way to Heaven?

That I may not ſeem to ſay this without good reaſon, let it ſeriouſly be conſider'd; That *Repentance* is not only a *duty*, but the ſpecial *priviledge* of the Goſpel. The good news which the *Angels* brought from Heaven was, That God had ſent us the *Saviour*, whom he had in the beginning promiſed to

Sinners; and the good News that our *Saviour* brought us, was, That God would for his ſake accept of the Sinner's *Repentance*, and *Faith* in him. And this was bleſſed Tidings indeed to a ſinful World; told ('tis true) before in the *Old Teſtament*, and ſhadow'd forth in the Law; but now moſt fully *declared*, and glorioufly *confirm'd* by JESUS CHRIST in the *New Teſtament*.

The *Law of Innocence*, and *Covenant of Works* made with *Adam*, allow'd of no ſuch thing as *Repentance*. All it ſaid was this, *Do this, and live; do it not, and dye. In the day thou eateſt thereof, thou ſhalt ſurely dye*, Gen. II. 17. The firſt breaking of the *Law*, was death. There could be no ſafe delaying to keep it, becauſe every delay of keeping it, was a breaking of it; for it was a not doing of the Commandment, and that was death. And it muſt be kept from *firſt* to *laſt*; for every ceaſing to do what was commanded, was a not doing of what was commanded; and to this *death* was threaten'd. No *repentance* therefore could have place under this *Covenant*. It was the *New Covenant* of *Grace* that made way for *Repentance*; and this is the *Goſpel-grace*, that Sinners who have broken God's *Law*, and for that are by the Sentence of the Law doom'd to *die*, ſhall yet, if they *repent*, find mercy with God through

JESUS

JESUS CHRIST. This is the *Goſpel*, which the *Apoſtle* ſaith *was preached before to Abraham*, Gal. III. 8. and therefore was before the *Law* of *Moſes*, ſo long, that it was firſt preach'd by God in that gracious Promiſe of the *ſeed of the woman*, Gen. III. 15. If *Repentance* had not been allow'd of from the firſt man's ſinning, even all along to the coming of our *Saviour* into the World, as well as after his coming; then had all men, during that long tract of time, for about four thouſand years, periſhed in their ſins. But to prevent this, it pleaſed God, that ſo ſoon as the *Law* was broken, the *Goſpel* ſhould be preach'd; that men might *believe*, and *repent*, and be *ſaved*. In a moſt aſtoniſhing condeſcenſion to the weakneſs of Sinners, he mitigated the rigor of the Law, and was pleas'd to accept henceforward of a *ſincere obedience* to it, inſtead of a *perfect fulfilling* of it. Heartily a man muſt *endeavour* to do the whole will of God; and whatever failings he finds in himſelf, he muſt as heartily *repent* of them, and *believe* that God for CHRIST his ſake, will not only *forgive* him his repented failings, but alſo *reward* his ſincere Obedience with Eternal Life. This is the *Grace* of the *Goſpel*; but this admits of no *delay* of our *ſincere obedience*, or of our *repentance*: but makes it our duty every day *ſincerely*

*cerely to obey*, and *unfeignedly to repent*; and he that doth not ſo, daily ſinneth againſt the *Goſpel of Grace*; and he that hopeth for Salvation whilſt he thus daily ſinneth againſt the Goſpel of Grace, muſt needs frame to himſelf in his imagination ſome other *Goſpel* than that which *Chriſt* hath preach'd, as the foundation of his Hope. The Goſpel of *Chriſt* gives no man leave to continue one moment in ſin and impenitence. It ſhews an eaſier way to Heaven than the Law did; and aſſures us of pardon and ſalvation upon our *repentance*, which the Law did not: but it hath not left Sin to be any part of our way to Heaven; nor aſſured any one that *delayeth* to repent, that he ſhall ever come thither.

Our Bleſſed *Saviour* came not to call Sinners *immediately* to *Heaven*, or to aſſure them of Bleſſedneſs, whether they lead a life of *repentance* or no; but he *came to call ſinners to repentance*, Matt. IX. 13. and ſo to put them into the new way to life, which was opened unto them through him. His Forerunner, *John the Baptiſt*, he ſent before to prepare his way, by his Preaching and *Baptiſm*. The ſubſtance of whoſe Preaching was this, *The kingdom of God is at hand; repent ye, and believe the Goſpel*, Mar. I. 15. *He preached the Baptiſm of Repentance, for the remiſſion of ſins*, v. 4. And the firſt preaching of our Holy

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JESUS was to the ſame purpoſe. *He began to preach, and to ſay, Repent, for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand*, Matth. IV. 17. And ſending out the Twelve to preach, we find the Buſineſs they were ſent about, was the very ſame, *Mar.* VI. 12. *They went out and preached, that men ſhould repent.* For this was God's will, *That Repentance and remiſſion of ſins ſhould be preach'd in Chriſt's name among all Nations*, Luke XXIV. 47. When St. *Peter*'s Auditors were moved with his Diſcourſe on the day of *Pentecoſt*, and began to be inquiſitive what courſe to take for themſelves; he thus directs them, *Acts* II. 38. *Repent and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jeſus Chriſt, for the remiſſion of ſins.* Now what doth all this ſignify, but that as many Sinners, as hearing this comfortable *Goſpel*, believe it, and are thereupon willing to leave their former ſinful courſe of life, and to bind themſelves in a new Covenant by *Baptiſm*, to live a *holy life* in all *ſincerity* and *uprightneſs* of heart, always as they find themſelves failing, *repenting* of their faults, and endeavouring to do better, ſhall, through the Merits of *Chriſt*, in whom they have believed, be pardon'd and ſaved? That therefore which the *Goſpel* calls, and admits us to, is a *ſtate of Repentance*, whereinto we enter by *Baptiſm*. *Adult* perſons, already come to the uſe of Reaſon,

ſon, muſt *repent*; that is, bid adieu to their old wicked way of life, and reſolve upon a new and holy one, before they be *baptized*. And *Chriſtian Infants* by *Baptiſm* covenant to lead a life of *repentance* when they come to underſtanding. And none are to *delay* this wilfully, but always as they are able to underſtand the ſtate whereunto they are called, and wherein they are engaged, to make good their part of the *new Covenant*; which is to live in ſincere obedience to *Chriſt*, and always to *repent* of their failings, as they are able to diſcover them. Thus *he that believeth, and is baptized, ſhall be ſaved*, Mar. XVI. 16. How! Shall he be ſaved, though he live as long as he will in his Sins after he is *baptized!* No; but if he die after *Baptiſm* before any actual ſin, and in a purpoſe not to commit any ſuch, he ſhall be ſaved; and if he do commit ſin afterward, and ſpeedily repent of it, not wilfully continuing therein, he ſhall be ſaved: But if he wilfully continue in his Sins, which in *Baptiſm* he renounced, 'tis no-where told him that he ſhall be ſaved. *Baptiſm ſaveth us* (ſaith the Apoſtle, 1 *Pet.* I. 3, 21.) But then he ſaith too, *'Tis not the putting away of the filth of the fleſh, but the anſwer of a good Conſcience towards God.* If our Conſciences, being examined, can anſwer us truly, that we covenanted *ſincerely*, and keep covenant

nant *faithfully*, *Baptiſm* ſaveth us. But what was it we promiſed? To *repent*, and begin to live an holy life at *ſuch* or *ſuch* an Age; or when we grow *old*, and are going to *dye*; or after we have had our *fill* of ſinning, ſome time or other when we ſhall think it moſt *convenient*? Was it not this we promiſed, *To keep God's holy will and commandments all the days of our life*? Was it not this Charge that *Chriſt* gave his *Apoſtles*, when he gave them Authority and Command to baptize; *Teach them to obſerve all things that I have commanded you*? Matth. XXVIII. 20. What, for ſome few days of their life, or for the whole remaining part of it? St. *Paul* ſhall anſwer this Queſtion, *Rom.* VI. 2. *Shall we* (ſaith he) *that are dead to ſin, live any longer therein*? What means he by ſaying, *We are dead to ſin*? Is it not, that we are by our *Baptiſm* engaged to live in Sin no longer? *Know ye not* (ſaith he again) *that ſo many of us as were baptized into Jeſus Chriſt, were baptized into his death*? v. 3. And what will follow thence? This is that which he tells us, *v.* 4. *Therefore we are buried with him by baptiſm into death; that as Chriſt was raiſed from the dead by the glory of the Father, even ſo we alſo ſhould walk in newneſs of life.* And then he adds, *v.* 6. *Our old man is crucified with him, that the body of ſin might be deſtroy'd,*

*that*

*that henceforth we ſhould not ſerve ſin.* Henceforth we are *not to let ſin reign in our mortal bodies, that we ſhould obey it in the luſts thereof. Neither to yield our members as inſtruments of unrighteouſneſs unto ſin; but to yield our ſelves unto God, as thoſe that are alive from the dead, and our members as inſtruments of righteouſneſs unto God,* v. 12, 13. *Henceforth* then, that is, from the time that we are called to *repentance* by the *Goſpel*, and are *baptized* into *Chriſt*, we are to lead a life (as St. *Paul* ſaith, *Eph.* IV. 1.) *worthy of the vocation wherewith we are call'd:* and that's a life of *ſincere Obedience*, and *unfeigned Repentance.* To ſin at all, is a tranſgreſſion of the *Law*, and that's *mortal* in it ſelf; but that the *Goſpel* comes in to our ſuccour, and gives us the *privilege* of *Repentance*; If then we *delay* our *Repentance*, ſo graciouſly indulged unto us, we ſin againſt the *mercy* of the *Goſpel*, as well as againſt the *righteouſneſs* of the *Law*; we reject our *Pardon*, moſt lovingly tender'd unto us, by our unwillingneſs to comply with the *Terms* on which it is offer'd us: and if we be ſick unto death, and will not in time apply the *only remedy* provided for us in our otherwiſe deſperate caſe, what can we expect but to dye? and what pity can we deſerve if we die?

And

And yet too many are apt enough to encourage themſelves, to hold out ſtill longer againſt all Calls and Invitations to a ſpeedy Repentance, upon the moſt deceitful grounds imaginable: Becauſe they read in the Prophet, *Ezek.* XVIII. 27. *When the wicked man turneth away from his wickedneſs that he hath committed, and doth that which is lawful and right, he ſhall ſave his ſoul alive.* And becauſe many have lived a long time very wickedly, and yet have been converted at length, and accepted of God upon their *converſion* and *repentance*; they are apt to think it no ſuch ill thing, as they are told it is, to *delay* their *Repentance* a-while longer; and therefore venture on it, in hopes they may be accepted hereafter, as well as others have been.

Now for men to flatter themſelves thus upon ſo very ſlender grounds, is ſo very fooliſh a thing, that one who conſiders not how much the love men have to Sin, is become too hard for their reaſon to anſwer, how weakly ſoever it plead for it ſelf; would exceedingly wonder how any reaſonable creature ſhould be guilty of it. It is indeed very true (and God's Holy Name be for ever Bleſſed for it) that God will accept of the *true Repentance* of great Sinners, who have lain long in their Sins without *Repentance*; and this is a good reaſon why one that hath

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continued long in Sin, ſhould not deſpair; but if he yet Repent, he may hope to be Saved: But is it therefore as good a reaſon why he ſhould *delay* his *Repentance*, in hopes to Repent hereafter? I have not yet ſaid, that no man who hath been long an *Impenitent Sinner*, can never *Repent*, or ſhall not be pardon'd if he *Repent*; though I am in doubt, whether or no a Sinner that Repents not till he come to die, can have a pardon upon ſo *late* a *Repentance*. But that which I have ſaid is this, That all *delay of Repentance* is exceedingly ſinful; and therefore nothing ought to be pleaded for it; no man ſhould dare to encourage himſelf in it. It is a Sin againſt the *Goſpel* of *Chriſt*, which is the only foundation Sinners have to raiſe their hope of *Salvation* upon? 'Tis, I think, beyond all diſpute, that though the *Goſpel* of *Chriſt* aſſure *Salvation* to the *Penitent*, yet it hath not aſſured *Repentance* to him who *delayeth* it. It calleth Sinners to *Repentance* without exception, whether they have been ſo a longer or a ſhorter time, and promiſeth acceptance; but doth it allow them to take what time they pleaſe for it, after they are called? Doth it tell them, that they may ſafely ſtay as long as they have a mind to Sin, and yet Repent at laſt? Neither *Ezekiel*, nor any other *Prophet*, no nor *Apoſtle*, hath left us one ſyllable in the

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Holy *Scripture* to encourage *Delay*; though they have left much to encourage him that hath long delay'd to *Repent*. To do the *former* were to encourage men to Sin. To do the *later*, is to encourage them to give over Sinning, though it be late. The *former* were to allow men to Sin that Grace may abound, which the *Apoſtle* abhors, *Rom.* VI. 1. The *later*, is but to dehort men from continuing in Sin through deſpair of Mercy. In ſhort, though an old Sinner may *Repent*, yet was it his Sin to ſtay till he was old; and he hath that Sin, as well as others, to Repent of; and no *Scripture* encourageth him to grow *Older* in Sin before he *Repent*, or to take what day he pleaſeth for it before his Death, or to hope he ſhall ever *Repent* at all if he do it not *now*. We are call'd immediately *to put off the old man, and to put on the new*, Eph. IV. 24. I need ſay no more, but that he who *delays* his *Repentance*, imagining that to *Repent afterwards* will be enough, muſt needs account an *Holy life* a needleſs thing; as though that were not the principal thing that God requires, but it would ſatisfie him if a man *died well*, how ill ſoever he had *lived*; when on the contrary, God hath often Commanded us to *live well*, and indeed all his Commands are to that purpoſe; but hath never commanded us to *die well*; and reaſon good,

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for there is no other way to *die well*, but to *live well*; and as little danger that he who *lives well*, ſhould not *die well*. Alas! To what purpoſe was a great part of the *Scripture* written, containing ſo many rules of *Holy living*, if one may *delay* to *live holily* as long as he will? Had it not been enough to have told us thus: *You that are Sinners muſt be ſure one* time *or* other *to* Repent *that you have been ſo.* Though it be your duty to *live an holy life*, yet you need not make all the *haſte* you can to do it; only you muſt take heed of this, That you *die* not before you have *Repented* that you have *lived wickedly*. A man that underſtands any thing of *God*, or of the *Goſpel* of *Chriſt*, would tremble to hear ſuch a ſenſe as this put upon it; and yet no better doth he uſe it, that *delays* his *Repentance* in *hopes* of *Repenting* time enough hereafter. And yet after all, would the *Goſpel* bear ſuch a ſenſe as this, it would not excuſe the *delaying* Sinner's either *Sin* or *Folly*: For were he ſure, that a *late Repentance* would be accepted; yet he cannot be ſure, that he ſhall *live long enough to Repent*, if he delay it never ſo little; and 'tis a *fooliſh* thing to venture all upon an uncertainty: And though he could be ſure of this, yet would it ſtill ſhew the greateſt *baſeneſs of Spirit*, and the meaneſt ſenſe of God, and of all thoſe Obligations of

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Duty and Gratitude which he hath laid upon us, that a man can have; both which I ſhall endeavour to make very plain in theſe following *Periods*.

## SECT. III.

### *The* Baſeneſs *of Delay.*

TO *Delay* our *Repentance* and our keeping of God's Commandments, is an exceeding *baſe*, *unworthy*, and *ſhameful* thing; and ſuch as I am confident, when any one throughly conſiders, he cannot without *bluſhing*, and great *indignation* at himſelf think he ſhould be guilty of it. I know we are all witty enough to invent excuſes for our *folly*; and to find covers for our *Nakedneſs*, and ſomething or other we have always at hand to hide our *filthineſs* and *vileneſs*. But we are not the leſs *fools* for being ſo *wiſe* as to *deceive* our ſelves; and when we once have the wit to conſider what we do, we ſhall be *aſhamed* of it. When we have ſaid all we can for our ſelves, our *Conſciences* (if ever they awake) will tell us, that we have no regard either to the *dignity* of our own *Nature*, as we are *men*; nor to the *good* of *others*, as we are *Neighbours* and *Brethren*, nor to the *Honour* of *God*, as

we are his *rational creatures*, whilſt we *delay our repentance*; but that all our delight is to live like *beaſts*, and all that we value is *earthly* and *vile*, and all our care is how to feed our *Swiniſh luſts*, and to humour *corruption*; and can a man perceive this to be his own temper, and not be *aſhamed* of himſelf? Yea, can any one chuſe but ſee, that what he doth muſt needs be altogether as *odious* and *abominable* to *God*, as it is *baſe* and *reproachful* to himſelf?

In the *firſt* place; How ſhall a man be able to pardon himſelf for dealing ſo baſely with his own Soul, as for a great part of his life, not to allow it the benefit of its *Reaſon*; but to enſlave it to the Tyranny of the *Fleſh*? How ſhall he be reconciled to himſelf for diſhonouring his own *nature*, and eſteeming of it ſo *vilely*, as tho it had no pre-eminence above that of the meaneſt *Animals*? All the while that we *delay* our *Repentance*, we chuſe for our ſelves a condition below the worſt condition that any of *them* can be in, a ſtate of *Sin*, and *Enmity* with God; wherein not the vileſt of them ever are or can be. How ſenſible are we in the mean time, of the *Dignity* of our *Nature*, as we are *Men*? How can we chuſe but bluſh to continue any time, ſo very unlike to that which God at firſt made *Man* to be? We cannot chuſe but know what filthy leprous creatures ſin hath made us:

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And why are we in no more haſte to be cleanſed and made whole? Why are we no more ambitious to retrieve the *Honour* and *Glory* which by ſin we have loſt? When God himſelf, to ſhew the value of our *Humane Nature*, was pleas'd to ſend his own *Eternal Son* to take it upon himſelf; and he who was ever *God*, was not aſhamed to be *found in faſhion as a man*, what a *baſeneſs* is it in us, to defile that ſame *Nature* in the drudgeries of ſin, which God thought not unworthy of a *Perſonal* Union with the *Divine Nature* in his *only begotten Son*? What's the reaſon we ſhould *delay* to have *Chriſt* formed in us, to be made Partakers of a *Divine Nature* in Holineſs? Doth not *God* in JESUS *Chriſt* moſt graciouſly invite us to this high honour? Hath he not open'd unto us a fountain for ſin and for uncleanneſs, wherein the fouleſt ſinner may waſh freely, and become as white as ſnow? What a vile degeneracy is this that we are ſunk into, That we ſhould fall ſo deeply in love with our own diſhonour, as to be loth to part with it? We love our *Sickneſs* more than our *Health*; our *Filthineſs*, more than *Purity*; our *Weakneſs*, more than *Strength*; our *Deformity*, more than *Beauty*; our *Chains* of Slavery to the Devil, more than the *Liberty* of the Children of God. We had rather obey our *Paſſions* than our *Reaſon*, and

live like *Beaſts* than like *Men*; be *Earthly* than *Heavenly*, *Carnal* than *Spiritual*, like *Devils* than like *Angels*, yea, than like *God*. What elſe can be the reaſon why we ſhould delay one minute to keep God's Commandments? Do not they all viſibly tend to our *Health*, and our *Honour*, and our *Happineſs*? Is it not the deſign of them all to make us *Wiſe* and *Good*, and every way *perfect* in our *Nature*, and like unto *God* in *Holineſs*; the *Brethren* of *Chriſt*, and *Children* of *God*, and *Heirs* to the glorious *Inheritance* of the Saints in Light? Why then make we no more haſte to keep them, and to enter into this moſt *Honourable* and *Bleſſed* Condition? Can it be for any other reaſon, but that we love to be as we are; and take more pleaſure in our wretched *Slavery*, and loathſom *Corruption*, than in all that *Bleſſedneſs* and *Glory* which God ſo freely offers to reſtore us to? And truly if we be thus madly in love with our own *Shame* and *Wretchedneſs*, it muſt needs be very juſt with God to leave us in them, and never once more to make us thoſe tenders of Mercy, which we cannot yet find in our hearts to thank him for, or to count worth our acceptance. Suppoſe a very poor beggar were very kindly invited by ſome extraordinary charitable Perſon of a great Eſtate, to throw away his naſty Rags, and to accept of a Rich

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Suit inſtead of them; and to leave off his wandring Trade, and come and live in his Family; with a farther Promiſe and Aſſurance, That he ſhould be Heir to a goodly Inheritance; and the Beggar ſhould give him no other anſwer but this; *I thank you, Sir, with all my heart, and I will do as you would have me; but I will take my own time for it: I love theſe Rags exceedingly, and I cannot part with them yet; and I am ſo accuſtom'd to wander, that I cannot yet endure to be confin'd, tho it were to a Palace: But ſome time or other I will accept of your kindneſs; when theſe Rags will hang about me no longer, and when I am ſo old or lame, that I can wander no more, I will come to your houſe, and expect to have your good Apparel and Eſtate.* Or ſuppoſe ſome leprous creature ſhould meet with a charitable Phyſician, who ſhould very kindly deſire him to accept of his help, promiſing perfectly to cure him; and this filthy wretch ſhould reply, *Sir, I very heartily and thankfully accept of your kindneſs, and am reſolved to make uſe of it whenever I think fit; but I have a great mind to be leprous a while longer; it's ſo pleaſing a thing to ſcratch this foul skin of mine, that I cannot endure to think of being well juſt now; but whenever I ſhall grow weary of this filthy diſeaſe, at leaſt, when I am almoſt kill'd with it, and afraid to dye, I will call for you, and you ſhall heal me.* I think

there's no body that would ſay ſuch perſons deſerv'd to have ſuch kindneſſes offer'd them any more; but that they were right ſerv'd, if they were left to periſh by their own baſe folly. How then ſhall we think our *Bleſſed* JESUS, who hath tendred us greater kindneſſes than theſe, in our far greater neceſſities, will reſent our *Baſeneſs* in *Delaying* to accept of his Love, whilſt we have as little to plead for our Delay, as theſe Wretches had? Indeed we need not gueſs at this; for himſelf hath told us, in the *Parable* of the *Feaſt*, *Luke* XIV. 'Tis God himſelf that is repreſented there by the *certain man that made a great ſupper, and bade many*; 'tis he, I ſay, that graciouſly condeſcends to bid ſinners to a Feaſt of fat things; but alas! one hath a *piece of ground* to go ſee, and another hath his *Oxen* to prove, and another hath a *new-married Wife* to cheriſh; and for theſe reaſons they cannot come when they are bidden: Well, they may ſtay away then for ever; for ſo ſaith God, v. 24. *None of theſe men that were bidden, ſhall taſte of my ſupper.* If we will be ſo *baſe* as to delight in filthineſs, why ſhould not God with Indignation ſay, Let them be filthy ſtill?

*Secondly*, Whoſoever *delayeth* his *Repentance*, behaveth himſelf as baſely in reference to others, as to himſelf; and ſhews very plain-

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ly, That he cares not what becomes of the whole World, ſo he might be left freely to enjoy his ſins, without any diſturbance. Can any man that profeſſeth Religion, be ignorant, That it is the breaking of God's Commandments, that brings upon the world of mankind, all the evils it at any time laboureth under? All the *Troubles* and *Diſturbances* which men have one from another, and all the terrible *Judgments* of God, which light upon whole *Kingdoms*, *Towns*, and *Families*, are owing to mens continuance in their ſins, and *delaying* their *Repentance*. He's not only too great a ſtranger to the Word of God, but a man of very little experience or obſervation, that underſtands not this. And truly he that underſtands it, and *delayeth* his *Repentance*, declareth himſelf thereby too *baſe* to make a Member of Humane Society; and the world may well be both *aſhamed* and *afraid* to afford him entertainment any longer. The very *Rabble* could hardly be too much enraged, or vent its fury too freely, on ſo unnatural a wretch, as chuſeth rather to continue one of them, for whom, and by whom, a *Nation* is in continual danger of being deſtroy'd, than to be one of thoſe *few* Righteous Perſons, for whoſe ſake God often ſpareth a very wicked Generation. Would we not account that man one of the worſt-natur'd men in the world, and fit to be

trampled down to dirt by all that met him, who ſhould be ſo malignantly bent againſt the welfare of mankind, and bear ſuch a ſpite againſt all men, that rather than the world ſhould want ſome noiſom Vermine, and poiſonous Creatures to moleſt and hurt it, would be content himſelf to be turn'd into a venomous *Toad* or *Viper*? And yet, when we well conſider things, how much worſe than either of theſe, and how much more miſchievous in all kinds, is that man, who *delayeth* his *Repentance*; and by his wilful continuance in ſin, not only diſordereth the world, and makes it a very uneaſie and dangerous place to live in, but provokes God daily to pour down Fire from Heaven on the Neighbourhood wherein he is ſuffer'd to live and do wickedly? What Puniſhment could be too great for that man, who being ſick of the *Plague*, and aſſured of his Cure, if he would ſtay within doors, and be ordered by his *Phyſician*, will not hearken to any Advice, in order to his Health, unleſs he may be allowed firſt to run abroad to and fro, infecting all the Countrey, as far as his ſtrength will carry him? And how much worſe than this, doth he who will not accept of the cure of his ſins, till he have had time enough to fulfil all his luſts, and to corrupt all his Neighbours, and make all about him, as much as in him lieth, fit ob-

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jects of God's juſt Wrath and Indignation? This is all the reſpect that the *delaying Sinner* hath to the *good* of *mankind*; that rather than want the vile Pleaſures of Sin, as long as he is able to ſerve his Luſts, he is reſolv'd never to regard what Evils any number of men fall under, and endure. And what greater *baſeneſs* of mind and temper can there be in any one, than this?

Yes, *Laſtly*, The *delaying Sinner* is come to a degree of *baſeneſs* far exceeding all that hath yet been ſaid of him. For by his *delaying* to keep God's *Commandments*, he declares, that he hath as little ſenſe of God's *Honour*, and of his own manifold *Obligations* to God, as of his own primitive *Dignity*, or of the World's *Happineſs*. To *delay* our *Repentance*, after that God hath been graciouſly pleaſed, in the greateſt wonder of mercy, by his only beloved *Son* to call us to it; and by him to open unto us a new Door to Salvation, after that Sin had wall'd up the old one againſt us; what leſs can this be, than, as they are ſaid to do in the Parable, *Matth.* XXII. 5. *to ſet light* by the Goſpel of Peace? What is it, but to ſlight all God's gracious tenders of *Peace* and *Reconciliation*, as things we think as yet *needleſs*, and not at all to be *valued*? To puff at the *goodneſs*, and loving *Invitations* of God, and to turn ſcornfully away from his Call,

Call, whilſt he beſeecheth us to *return* unto him, and be ſaved: one of us preferring his *Farm*, another his *Merchandiſe* before the *Kingdom of God?* We cannot but be ſenſible how great a *baſeneſs* it is to deal, as *delaying Sinners* do, with Almighty God, when we ſhall have well conſider'd the *condition* wherein his *Mercy* overtakes us. We cannot but confeſs, that as his *Creatures*, we are *naturally* obliged to be entirely obedient to his Will in all things: and that as *Sinners*, who have diſobey'd his will, he may juſtly puniſh us as he pleaſeth. And we know, that for Sin we all lie under the *curſe* of Death, and 'tis *juſtice* in God to *execute* the *Sentence* of Death upon us at any time, when he thinks it fit. But inſtead of doing ſo, he is pleaſed in much goodneſs to offer us a *Pardon*, and that upon ſuch *terms*, as had all been left to our own choice, we our ſelves could not reaſonably have deſired eaſier; though one would think no terms of *Salvation* ſhould ſeem hard to thoſe who were under a *condemnation* to Eternal Torments. All that our good God requireth of us, is but to *repent* of our ſins, and to come in at the hearing of his gracious *Proclamation*, and to ſubmit our ſelves to the *Government* of that Bleſſed *Saviour*, who in his love hath provided for us; and to conclude our ſelves ſafe, whilſt we

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continue under his Conduct. And this is it that the *delaying Sinner* thinks it not yet time to accept of. Now if any of us be of this mind, pray let us well conſider, what it is that we do. Our *offended* God is willing not only to *pardon* us, and rid us of the *fear* and *danger* of Eternal Miſery; but alſo to *reward* us with Eternal Bleſſedneſs, on condition that we will come in at his Call, and take the eaſie Yoak, and light Burthen of JESUS CHRIST upon us: but we will not yet. Is not this then as much as to ſay thus unto God — *Good God be content, and have patience a-while longer, there's no ſuch haſte. Thou mayſt be ſure we have no mind to periſh, and therefore need'ſt not to queſtion it; but one time or other, before we die, we will come and accept of thy kindneſs. Be not then ſo haſty with us, but let us alone a-while to mind our own buſineſs that we have ſet our ſelves to do; and think it time enough if we hearken to thy Call, when we ſhall be a little more at leiſure. The World calls us, and our Luſts call us, and we cannot do all things at once; theſe muſt be ſerv'd in the firſt place; and when we have done what we can for them, we will ſerve thee.* Let us now conſider, what we would think of thoſe men, whom we ſhould overhear uttering ſuch words as theſe to God with their mouth. And then conſider again, whether this muſt not be the ſecret Language

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of every one's heart that wilfully delayeth to repent, and keep God's Commandments. I know there may be many Cauſes of mens putting off, and neglecting their duty to God. Some of us are either ſo *ignorant*, or ſo *regardleſs* of God, and of all things that ſhall be after this life, that they never *think* to any purpoſe, or *ſeriouſly*, and *concernedly*, of any ſuch thing: and we muſt needs confeſs this to be a moſt horrid *indignity* offer'd to God, as well as a moſt ſtupid *ſenſeleſneſs* of our own good or evil. Some may have fooliſhly perſwaded themſelves, either that *Repentance* is a far *ſlighter* thing, than really it is; or that there is no ſuch *indiſpenſable neceſſity* of it as is pretended: and how can we excuſe ſuch as theſe for the affront they put upon God, in not believing his Word; or in taking ſo little pains to underſtand it? But whatever Cauſes may be aſſign'd why ſome men repent not, this is certain, That whoſoever is convinced that *Repentance* is a duty, without which he cannot be ſaved, nor God honour'd by him, and yet *delayeth* it; delayeth it for this reaſon, that he is in love with ſome ſin or other, which he is not yet willing to part with; the love whereof is greater in him, than his love of God, and bears it down. Otherwiſe his love to God would conſtrain him to make as much haſte

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to *ſerve* and *honour* him, as his love to ſin now doth to *diſobey* and *diſhonour* him. How long hath God already waited to be gracious? How much patience hath he had already to ſee himſelf diſhonour'd by us? How many calls and warnings hath he already given us to repent? What then do we in putting off our Repentance yet longer, but in effect bid him ſtay a little longer yet; as though we thought him bound to wait our leiſure, and obſerve our time, and not our ſelves to obſerve his? Yea, what is this, but, as St. *Paul* ſaith, *Rom.* II. 4. *To deſpiſe the riches of his goodneſs, and forbearance, and long-ſuffering, not knowing* (or not conſidering) *that the goodneſs of God leadeth us to repentance?* God calls upon us in good *earneſt*, in great *compaſſion*, in much *patience* and *long-ſuffering*; and all this purely for our own Eternal Welfare. *All day long* (ſaith he) *have I ſtretched out my hand unto a diſobedient and gain-ſaying people*, Rom. X. 21. Iſa. LXV. 2. And what ſaith the *delaying Sinner* to all this, when he is told of it? *I hear you* (ſaith he) *but let him ſtay a-while longer, no haſte yet, I have ſomething elſe to do firſt.* Why? What is it that ſhould hinder us from making what haſte we can to be happy, in hearkning to ſo good and gracious a God and Father? Why not now, as well as hereafter? I am

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yet too *young*, ſaith the *young Sinner*; 'tis yet but the time of bloſſoming with me; let me flouriſh a-while in the days of my vanity; to think too much of *God*, and the *other World*, of *Death* and *Judgment*, would make my Flower fade too ſoon, and blaſt all my youthful delights; to be religious ſo ſoon, is to be *old* before my time; would you have me turn my *Spring* into *Autumn*? I will bear Fruit to God, when Fruit-time comes. I am too *buſie* yet (ſaith the man of *full-growth*) my ſtrength is but juſt come, and fits me for man-like Exerciſes, and the buſineſs of the World: Theſe are the things it now becomes men of my ſtrength and vigour to be wholly employ'd in. I muſt not yet unfit my ſelf for the management of worldly Affairs, by entertaining the melancholly Thoughts of preparing my ſelf to go out of the World. What Trade can a man drive on thrivingly in this World, if he make his Conſcience too ſoon tender and delicate? My head is yet too full of *Cares* (ſaith the *old Sinner*) and I muſt not neglect the preſent opportunity of making all ſure to Poſterity, ſeeing I have one foot already in the Grave. So ſoon as I have ſet all ſtraight for this World, which I now make haſte to do, I will think of the next. O how wiſe and provident are we all for this World, and for our Luſts! Let us ſe-

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riouſly conſider now, what's the plain Engliſh of all this: Are we not afraid, leſt God ſhould underſtand it? And yet underſtand it he doth, much better than we. *God is greater than our hearts, and knoweth all things,* 1 John III. 20. He knoweth very well, that the meaning of all we can ſay for our delaying to keep his Commandments is this, with what fine words ſoever we would cover it. *We will give the Firſt-fruits, and every choice part of our time, our health, our ſtrength, our wealth, our parts, and all we have, to Sin and Satan; and the vile and refuſe, and what we cannot tell how otherwiſe to diſpoſe of, we will give to God, who gave us all things. Whatſoever good thing he hath beſtow'd upon us, we will ſpend as much of it as we can upon his Enemies; and then throw him back their leavings. We are reſolved to have our own will, and to do our own pleaſure whilſt we are able; and when we know not how to take our pleaſure in any thing, we will do what we can to pleaſe God. We will do, and ſubmit to his Will, when we can no longer do what we would our ſelves. It's enough to beſtow that upon God, which is good for nothing elſe, or whereof we can make no other uſe. We may come, ere we die, to be deprived of all the delightful things which this World affords; we may come to be old, and paſt all youthful pleaſures, and worldly buſineſs too; we may come to*

be

*be ſick, and cannot reliſh any longer what before we loved; and then will it be time enough to ſerve God. We reſolve to part with all our ſins at laſt for God's ſake, but we cannot endure to do it ſo ſoon; that is, in truth we cannot endure to part with them at all; and will never do it for his ſake, nor at all, as long as we can keep them. We perfectly hate God's Service, and are reſolved to keep out of it as long as we can, or dare: in plain terms, we will never ſerve him, if we can help it; and when we talk of reſolving to ſerve him hereafter, we can mean no more but this; We are reſolved to keep out of his ſervice as long as ever we can, and to venture as far as ever we dare in the way to death.* Now when we conſider, what God is in himſelf; and what he hath always been, and would be to us; I think it may be ſafely concluded, that there cannot be imagined any higher degree of *baſeneſs*, whereof 'tis poſſible for man to be guilty, than this amounts to. And therefore nothing can be more *odious* and *provoking* to Almighty God, than this foul Sin of *delaying* our *Repentance*.

SECT.

## SECT. IV.

### *The First* Danger *of Delaying.*

I Am ſenſible how hard a thing it is to make one who *loves* his ſin, to ſee the *baſeneſs* of it. If he be *young*, it's hard to bring him to that degree of *ſeriouſneſs*, as is needful to ſuch a thorough conſideration, as muſt make him underſtand it: and if he be *old*, long cuſtom hath *harden'd* him in it, and taken away the *ſenſe* of *baſeneſs*. But he that is grown too *impudent* to be *aſhamed*, may poſſibly be made *afraid*; and an *apprehenſion* of *danger* may move him that hath loſt the *ſenſe* of *Baſeneſs*. Let us therefore now conſider the great *danger* we are in by *delaying* our *Repentance*, and the *keeping of* God's *Commandments*; and we ſhall find it to be no leſs, than that of *periſhing everlaſtingly*. We muſt repent before we die, or at death we ſink into Eternal Miſery; and therefore 'tis certain, that ſeeing none of us knoweth how ſoon he muſt die, every delay of our Repentance, which muſt be before we die, or never, is extremely *dangerous*. We ſay, we are *reſolved* to repent; and it behoves us to do more than *reſolve* upon it; for without *doing* it,

how fully ſoever we *reſolve* to do it, we muſt *periſh* for ever. When therefore will we repent, that we may be out of danger? Not yet, but ſometime *hereafter*. Well, but now conſider it in earneſt; Is there not a great deal of *danger* in driving it off till *hereafter?* Run we not a great hazard in doing ſo? All we can *hope* for, and all that we can *fear*, our attaining to the *one*, our eſcaping the *other*, depends upon our *actual Repentance*; and will we yet venture all upon *hereafter?* Suppoſe That *Hereafter* never come, but we die before; then farewell to all poſſibility of *Repentance* and *Salvation* too. Suppoſe we live till *Hereafter*, but be then as *unwilling* to repent as we are now; then ſhall we be no better, but much worſe than we are now; and in more *danger* of dying in our *impenitence*, and of *Periſhing*. Suppoſe we ſhall *hereafter* have ſome kind of *willingneſs* to repent, but ſhall not be *able* to repent ſo, as that God will accept of our Repentance; then is there no remedy, but we are undone for ever. Here then lieth the *danger* of *delaying* till *hereafter*. We know not *whether we ſhall have an* hereafter *or no to repent in*; we know not, if we have an *hereafter*, *whether we ſhall repent in it or no:* We know not, if we ſhall in ſome ſort repent hereafter, *whether our Repentance then will be accepted, and do us any good, or none.*

How

How *dangerous* then muſt it be to put it off till *hereafter*!

*What aſſurance can any of us have, that we ſhall have an* hereafter *to repent in?* How know we, that we ſhall not die before? *God* hath not aſſured us of any ſuch thing, and *Man* cannot; on what then do we build our hopes of living to any time *hereafter?* We are well aſſured, That *it is appointed for all men once to die, and after that, the judgment*; Heb. IX. 27. We are well aſſured, that *except we repent, we ſhall all periſh*, and die *the ſecond death*, and *go into everlaſting puniſhment*. But who hath aſſured us, that we ſhall have any time at all, after this that now is, to repent in? And if we be not aſſured of this, what can it be to put off that which muſt be done before we die, to another day, which we have no aſſurance at all that we ſhall live to ſee, but a raſh hazarding of our Souls to all Eternity? What is our life? St. *James* hath told us, and we all know it; *It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vaniſheth away*, Jam. IV. 14. And thence that *Apoſtle* very rationally diſſuades men from the great folly of confidently reſolving, any otherwiſe than conditionally, to do any thing hereafter; *Whereas ye know not what ſhall be on the morrow:* How fooliſh a thing is it to ſay, *to morrow* we will do this or that?

*Ye ought to ſay, if the Lord will, we ſhall live, and do this or that*, V. 15. When we ſay, we will repent to morrow; do we know whether we ſhall be alive or dead to morrow? If we do not, what can we mean by ſaying ſo, but this; That if we live, we will repent to morrow? And are we content then to be damned if we die to night? If not, why are we ſo mad as to put it to the venture? *Boaſt not thy ſelf of to morrow, for thou knoweſt not what a day may bring forth*, ſaith the wiſe man, *Prov.* XXVII. 1. Alas! a day, an hour, the leaſt moment of time may lay the ſtrongeſt and moſt confident of us all upon our backs in the duſt; and why are we confident we ſhall repent to morrow, when we know ſo little what changes one ſingle minute may produce? Is it poſſible that any of us, whilſt we ſee ſo many every day dropping down into the grave round about us, ſhould need a Monitor to mind him, that this life is a very tickliſh thing to truſt to? What though we be *young*, and *luſty*, and *healthful*? Were not ſome of them ſo too, who died the other day; and thought they not themſelves as likely to live as any of us can be? All their confidence is ſwallowed up of Death in a moment; and I am ſure we are all of us ſo many days the nearer to Death, as we have out-lived them. How many hun-

hundreds yearly die in the *heat* and *wantonneſs* of their *youthful* blood? How many in the very fulneſs of *ſtrength* and *vigour*? How many in the very throng of their worldly *buſineſs*, and whilſt they are as buſy as the *Bee* in gathering for *old age*? How many in the midſt of their *mirth* and *jollity*, yea, in the very *acts* of *Sin*, in their *drunkenneſs* and *gluttony*, their *fornication* and *adultery*, their *theft* and *robbery*, their *anger* and *revenge*? How many in the height of their *ſecurity* and *confidence*, *ſleeping* in their beds, riding merrily on the rode, *going* buſily about their common affairs? It's no news to hear of *ſudden* and *unexpected* Deaths of many ſorts; and leſs ſtrange can it be to any one to ſee thoſe *young* people cut off by Death, who thought it too ſoon to become *good* and *ſerious*; and were unwilling to marr their juvenile *pleaſures* with many thoughts of *Piety* and *Religion*. Let us but think, how many are already Dead, who delay'd their Repentance with as much confidence as we can do, to Repent hereafter, till they had no time left them to Repent in: And how fruitleſly they now lament their folly in doing ſo. Think but what they would now be content to give, that they might have their life to begin again on Earth; and whether they would, were that granted them, venture again to delay

their Repentance, and hazard another ſudden fall into thoſe intollerable torments, which now they feel! O let us not ſtay, till thinking of this will do us no good; let us not go on till we fall into their condition, and experience the Torments of vain and fruitleſs wiſhes. Let us not indulge our infidelity as to theſe things, till ſome come from the dead to make us believe; leſt we be made, before we fear it, to ſee and feel, what we make no more haſte to eſcape. We ſay ſtill, we will Repent and become new men to morrow: But alas, we know not yet whether we ſhall live till then; nay, we know not but that our bodies may be in the Grave, and our Souls in Hell to morrow; and for this very reaſon, becauſe we Repent not to day. Who then that is wiſe will venture one moment longer on ſuch an uncertainty?

But ſuppoſe we may live, and have the time we at preſent preſume ſo groundleſly upon; we may not be one jot the better for it when we have it. We are to conſider yet farther, how many things may happen to us at that time or before, which may as much diſable us to Repent, as Death it ſelf. We may live, and yet be as good as dead unto all manner of Religious Duty and Exerciſe: We may be, we know not how ſoon, in ſuch a condition, as we may not be able either to

*reflect*

*reflect* on what is *paſt*, or *underſtand* what is *preſent*, or *conſider* what is to *come*. We cannot be ignorant, how many *Diſeaſes* ſuddenly ſurpriſe men, which, though they do not immediately deprive them of life, yet deſtroy their *memory*, and *underſtanding*, and *reaſon*; or ſo weaken them, that they can be of little uſe for the exerciſe of *Repentance*. May we not be ſuddenly taken with an *Apoplexy* or a *Lethargy*, with a *Phrenzy*, or *Melancholy*, or *Dotage*? May we not become *mad* or *fooliſh*, and ſo diſtracted and crazed in our heads, that we cannot at all *conſider* either what we do, or what we ſhould do? Yea, ſuppoſe none of theſe things befall us, yet are there other *diſeaſes* and *pains*, whereunto we are ſubject, and which we may labour under a very conſiderable time before they kill us; by which yet we may be brought into ſuch a condition, as we ſhall find it very hard to perform any Religious Duty as we ought. We may lie under ſuch continual, and even intollerable *pains* of body; under ſuch daily *languiſhings*, and *faintings*, and *decays* of Strength and Spirits, that we ſhall have very little *freedom* or *ſtrength* of mind left us to Conſider, and do all that is needful to Repentance, which till then hath been delay'd. Why do not we think our ſelves concern'd to prevent all theſe evils? Are we not ſenſible that ſuch things

often befal men, who as little fear'd them as we do? And may they not, for ought we know, befal us as well as any others? If we are ſurprized by any of theſe after we are become ſincere *Penitents*, they do us but little hurt; they are God's *Viſitations* indeed; and for what, He (it may be) only knows; but the worſt that comes to us by them, is only this, That we are long a dying, and in ſuch a manner as it pleaſeth God. But if we have not *ſincerely Repented* before theſe evils ſeize us, it is greatly to be feared, we ſhall never be able to Repent; and God only knows, what will become of us. Let us then be ſo wiſe, as to make good uſe of our *ſtrength* and *health*, our *ſenſes* and *underſtanding*, whilſt we have them. Why make we not all ſure now whilſt we can, ſeeing we know not how ſoon it will be, that we cannot? Now we are *young*, we are too *jovial* and *airy*; and we put all off to thoſe years, which we ſuppoſe will of courſe bring with them more *Serionſneſs*, and when we think it will better become us to look *gravely* and *Religiouſly*. When thoſe years, which we are wont to call the years of *Diſcretion*, are come; we find that a great deal of other *buſineſs* comes with them; and now we are *men* and *women*, we are engaged in the *World*; and if we have got looſe from the *Vanities* of *Youth*, which do

not

not ſeldome hold us faſt even till we die, we are become intangled in things that are but a little better; and we put off all yet till *old age* come and make us more *leiſure*. *Old age* is all this while ſtealing inſenſibly upon us, and we perceive it not for the throng we are in, till we find our ſelves on a ſudden *grown* too *heavy* and *dull*, and our faculties too much *decay'd*, and too *feeble* for much buſineſs. And then inſtead of *ſerious* reflections on the *ſtate* of our *Souls*, we are rather apt to reflect with too much *concern* on our preſent bodily *weakneſs*, as we are become unable to do any longer as we have done, and yet have as great a mind to do as ever. And hence alſo inſtead of being *Penitent* for our Sins, we are apt to grow *Paſſionate*, *Peeviſh*, and *Impatient*; and our Repentance is ſtill put off to our laſt *Sickneſs*. After all theſe delays, it may be we have no *Sickneſs* at all, Death gives us no warning at all of its approach, but knocks us down with a *ſudden* blow; or elſe it ſends ſuch a Meſſenger for us, as will not allow us to *know* or *conſider*, whither we are going, by reaſon of either the *ſtupefaction* or *Torment* which it lays us under. What remains then, but that we take the Preacher's advice, *Ecc.* XII. 1. *Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou ſhalt ſay, I have no pleaſure in them.* But

But beſides the *uncertainty* of the term of our life, as to us; and many diſappointments, which not unuſually befal us in it; we ought farther to conſider, that it is very *Juſt* in God to cut our lives the *ſhorter*, for our *delaying to keep his Commandments*. Neither can we take a more likely courſe to provoke God to take us away in the midſt of our days, or to render them by his *Judgments* intollerable to us, than this bad uſe which we make of them. When by delaying our Duty to God we make it appear, that we grudge him any conſiderable part of our time; and that we are reſolved to diſhonour him with as much of it, and to beſtow upon his Service as little of it as we can; what readier way can we take to provoke him, either to cut our thread of life very ſhort, or to make it very knotty to us? Can we our ſelves when we think well of it, judge it fit, that he, to whoſe goodneſs we owe our life, and being, and in whoſe hands our times are, *Pſal.* XXXI. 15. *In whoſe hand is the ſoul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind*, Job XII. 10. ſhould allow us juſt as much time as we deſire, to diſhonour and affront him in? I confeſs, I know not what greater *Preſumption* we can be guilty of, than to reſolve to rebel againſt God as long as we can think it ſafe to do ſo, and to expect he ſhould give us from day to day more time to

do

do ſo in. O let us take heed, leſt he take away our breath, and we return to our duſt ere we have begun to ſerve him; for then be ſure all theſe vain thoughts ſhall periſh. *Pſal.* CVI. 4. The youngeſt of us is not ſure to live one day longer; and we who grow old are very ſure, that we cannot have many days more, if any, to live in this World: nor what kind of days, be they many or few, they will prove to us. Let us then no longer delay our Repentance, becauſe we are ſo little ſure that we ſhall have *any hereafter* to repent in.

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## SECT. V.

### *The Second* Danger *of* DELAY.

AS it is a *dangerous* thing to drive off our Repentance, in hopes that we may have time enough *hereafter* to repent in: So is it altogether as *dangerous* upon another account, *Becauſe we know not, if we have an* hereafter, *whether we ſhall repent in it, or no.* I have already mention'd ſome things, which may diſable us to repent hereafter; but beſides this, it may well be fear'd, that we may be alſo as *unwilling*, and every way as much *indiſpoſed* to repent hereafter, as we are now.

Is

Is there not as much reaſon *now* to move us to keep the Commandments of God, as ever there will be *hereafter?* Is he not the ſame God now, that he will be then, *one* and the *ſame*, *unchangeable* for ever? Are not our *Obligations*, and our *Dependances* on him the ſame? And is not the *danger* of *dying impenitent*, the ſame now, that it will be then? What reaſon then can we have to hope, that if the *conſideration* of *theſe* things will not move us *now* to Repentance, it ſhould prevail more with us *hereafter?* How *difficult*, or how *eaſie* ſoever the Duty may *now* ſeem to us; or whatever it is that now *affrights* us from it, or *encourageth* us to delay it: we have little cauſe to think that it will become more *eaſie* by *delay*; that we ſhall meet with fewer *difficulties*, the longer we drive it off, or fewer *temptations* to *defer* it ſtill longer. Nay, 'tis very certain, that the longer we delay, the *difficulty* daily more and more increaſeth, and very probably, ſo will our *unwillingneſs* too; for 'tis not very likely, that we ſhall be more *willing* to ſet our ſelves about a *harder* work hereafter, ſeeing we dare not venture on it *now* that it is much more *eaſie*. Would to God all impenitent Sinners could be brought to conſider this; That all the good they do themſelves by delaying their Repentance, is to make it every day *harder* for them to do a thing,

thing, which they muſt do, or elſe they periſh. That we may be convinced of this *folly*, let us obſerve but theſe few things. 1. *That the Cauſes of Delay will hereafter be the ſame, and as forcible upon us, as now.* 2. *That the Work will hereafter be greater.* 3. *Our Strength for it, is like to be leſs.* 4. *Our Time to do it in, will be ſhorter.* 5. *Our Aſſiſtances are like to be fewer.* And, 6. *Our Impediments and Diſcouragements are like to be more.* And when all this hath been well thought on, we cannot but ſee, that though all that time, which we very groundleſly preſume upon, ſhould be granted us; yet cannot we be ſure that we ſhall, nay, we are more ſure of the two, that we ſhall not make ſo good uſe of it, as we may do of the time which is preſent.

1. Look what *Cauſes* we think we have at *preſent* to delay our Repentance till another time; the *ſame*, or *more*, and *more powerful* to work upon us, are we like to have *hereafter*; and it is like to be as *hard*, or *harder* then not to be *tempted* to delay, than now it is. Is it now a *careleſs*, *negligent* and *unconſidering* temper of mind that is the cauſe of our delay? And is it not likely, the longer we delay, that this ſame *ſupine* and *regardleſs* temper will be the more fixed and confirm'd?

What

What is it that we think will alter it? The *Temper* we are of is ſuch, as admits of none, or very ſlight *thoughts* of any ſuch *future alteration* of it; theſe *thoughts* conſiſt not with ſuch a *careleſs* and *inconſiderate* temper, as we ſuppoſe to be the cauſe of our delay. However, ſuch a change of it hereafter is not to be depended on. What makes men more *careleſs* and *ſecure* in their ſinful Courſes, than long *impunity* and *forbearance?* He that was a little *afraid* to venture on ſin at firſt, leſt he ſhould be *puniſh'd* for it, and leſt the Wrath of God ſhould light ſuddenly upon him in ſome ſevere judgment; and he that was at firſt ſomewhat *aſhamed* to ſin, and unable to conquer his *natural Modeſty*, or to endure the *reproaches* of his *natural Conſcience*: after he has with ſome ſtrugling broke through theſe bars of *fear* and *ſhame*, the further he ventures forward, the farther he leaves them both behind him. When the ſin is become *cuſtomary*, and yet he finds that he *ſuffereth* nothing by it; he is the more *emboldened* to continue in it. The longer he *eſcapeth* what at firſt he was *afraid* of, the leſs apt is he to *fear* it; and the more *hope* he hath to *eſcape* it ſtill. *The proſperity of fools deſtroyeth them*, Prov. I. 32. How, but by making them the more *careleſs* and *reſolute* to go on in the ways wherein they *thrive*, as we find it by daily experience

experience in all ſorts of Sinners? *Becauſe ſentence againſt an evil work is not ſpeedily executed; therefore the hearts of the ſons of men is fully ſet in them to do evil,* Eccl. VIII. 11.

Is the *cauſe* of our delay a ſecret root of *Atheiſm* or *Infidelity*, a diſbelief of God, and of his Word? The longer we go on in any ſin, the more likely are we to be *harden'd* in our *unbelief*. For whilſt we hold on offending God, and diſobeying his Word; and yet find, that notwithſtanding all his *terrible threatnings*, he doth not ſeem to take any notice of us, but letteth us alone, and ſtretcheth not out his hand to execute *vengeance* upon us; we are apt to take as little notice of God, as we fooliſhly imagine he taketh of us; and becauſe we continue to do theſe evil things, and God keeps ſilence, we conclude the more confidently, either with the Fool, *Pſal.* XIV. 1. That *there is no God*: or with another as fooliſh as he, *Pſal.* L. 21. *That he is altogether ſuch an one as our ſelves.* The proſperous Sinner is apt to *ſay in his heart, God hath forgotten; he hideth his face, he will never ſee it. He contemneth God; he ſaith in his heart, thou wilt not require it*, Pſal. X. 11, 13. *The Lord ſhall not ſee, neither ſhall the God of Jacob regard it*, Pſal. XCIV. 7. To ſuch a *brutiſhneſs* doth our *continuance* in ſin ordinarily bring us!

Is

Is it an unwarrantable *preſumption* of the greatneſs of God's *Mercy*, or of his unwearied *Forbearance*, that is the *cauſe* of our delay? And is it not then too natural to men of this *preſumption*, to preſume ſtill the more *confidently*, the longer God *forbeareth* them? Certainly he that delayeth at firſt, preſuming on that *patience*, whereof he hath yet had comparatively but little *experience*; will be the more apt to *delay* ſtill longer, after he hath long *experienced* the *patience*, and *long-ſuffering* of God.

Is it the *love of our ſins* wherewith we are bewitched, ſo that we are not able to part with them, and therefore *delay* our Repentance? And what reaſon have we, if we now love them ſo well, to think, that we ſhall not love them as well hereafter, as now we do? What can we imagine ſhould bring us out of love with ſin more *then*, than *now*? We may not be able to *commit* ſome ſins hereafter, which now we commit; but I ſee not, why we may not have the ſame *love* for them hereafter, which we have now. Nay, I ſee, that uſually it is ſo; and that few ſins are leſs *loved* for becoming *habitual*. The more we *practiſe* them, the more we *love* them; and the longer we have *taſted* the ſenſual ſweetneſs of them, the leſs can we endure to be without them. And if our *Inclinations* and

*Tempers*

*Tempers* ſo alter with our *Age*, that ſome *juvenile* ſins do not reliſh with us as they were wont; yet we do but change them for *others*; and we are as averſe from *goodneſs*, and as much inclin'd to *evil* as ever. The Sins which ſuit with *all ages* of man, we commit with as much greedineſs as ever, and as things which by *cuſtom* are become *natural*; and we *ſin* even as we *eat* and *drink*; being as unable (as it ſeems to us) to live without the *one*, as without the *other*. And though, it may be, ſome ſorts of Sins grow *ſtale*, and we find hereafter no *temptation* to them; yet is there one thing, which, the longer we delay our Repentance, grows ſtill the more ſtrong; and that is an *inordinate ſelf-love*; and the leſs we have been uſed to *deny our ſelves* in the things we love, the *harder* ſtill ſhall we find it to do ſo. We have been uſed to humour our ſelves, and to feed corrupt Nature in all things which it craves; and then it's all a-caſe, how the Appetite changes, as to *this* or *that* ſin; ſeeing what it deſires, it muſt have; and we have loſt all power to reſiſt it. But theſe things 'tis needleſs to *prove*, being too notorious to be *denied*. Only they ought to be more *conſider'd*, that when we think well how there will be hereafter as *many temptations* to delay, and as *powerful* too, as there are now; we may diſcern our

folly in delaying our Repentance *now*, in hopes to repent *hereafter*.

2. But this is not all; for we ſhall certainly find, that the longer we delay, *the greater will the work be*. And then, whatever the *cauſes* be that now perſuade us to delay it, they are more likely to perſuade us to delay *hereafter* than *now*. If they can prevail with us to neglect a neceſſary work, when 'tis *leſs*; they will more eaſily prevail, when the very *greatneſs* of the work ſeems enough of it ſelf to diſhearten us from going about it.

Let us then conſider, how much *greater* a work it will be to repent *hereafter*, than *now*. *Firſt*, It is very certain, that the longer we have neglected to *learn* the will of God, the more we have to learn. And the longer we have neglected to *do* the Commandments of God, the more we have to do. The longer we ſtay before we *repent*, the *more ſins* we have to repent of. He that hath long ſince begun his work, and hath made a conſiderable progreſs in it, will not hereafter find ſo much to do, as he that hath done nothing at all of it, but hath then all to begin. All thoſe *Omiſſions* and *Neglects* we have been every day guilty of, come then to be repented of; as well as the *things* which have been *neglected* and *omitted*, as far as 'tis poſſible, to be done; and all this labour had been ſaved,

had

had we repented, and done our duty in due time. We every day ſin, even though we do all that we can to avoid it; (which yet we ſeldom do) and every day we ought to repent of the ſins of the day; and therefore till we repent, every day much increaſeth the *labour* of Repentance, becauſe every day adds to the *number* of our ſins to be repented of. And our *delay to repent*, when we have ſinned, is one of the *greateſt* ſins of all; and every day's *delay* is ſuch a *new* ſin added to that of the former day. And indeed, ſo long as a man delayeth his Repentance, he doth nothing elſe but heap up ſin upon ſin; and every thing he doth, is full of ſin. And what a taſk doth he thus make himſelf, to repent of all theſe ſins hereafter? Yea, every *Conviction* that we have ſinned, and ought to repent; and every *purpoſe*, and *reſolution*, and *thought* of repenting, not ſpeedily put in execution, is an *aggravation* of our guilt, and makes our ſins the more *ſinful*, the leſs *excuſable*, and more hardly *pardonable*; becauſe 'tis a ſign, that we go on in ſin againſt *Knowledg*, againſt *Conſcience*, againſt the good *Motions* of God's Holy Spirit, and againſt the *Rebukes* of our own Hearts; the delay is throughly *wilful*, and ſin is freely *choſen*; and thus our ſins become as great as can be, and are a *ſtriving* againſt *Conſcience*, a *reſiſting* and *grieving* of

the *Spirit*, a *quenching* of its holy *Motions*, and a daily *fighting* againſt God, or a reſolute maintaining our ground againſt him. And muſt not all this make Repentance a much *harder* work, than otherwiſe it might have been? How much eaſier is it to pluck up two or three weeds daily in a Garden, as we perceive them ſhooting forth; than to weed one that, through neglect, is quite overrun with them? And to how much better purpoſe too were it ſo to do? For by that means, the good Plants have liberty to thrive and flouriſh; whilſt by neglect all that's good is choaked up, and rarely turns to any advantage. So much eaſier is it, and to far better purpoſe and advantage to repent *early* than *late*. When one hath gone on but a few ſteps in a *wrong* way, and will not then turn back, becauſe he thinks it too much *pains* for him to do ſo; how much more *unwilling* is he like to be to go back again, when he is gone on many miles? He that is afraid to encounter two or three Enemies at preſent, will hardly be ſo ſtout afterwards as to ſet upon an Army of many thouſands: eſpecially when by his delay he hath given them time to ſtrengthen themſelves. And this is the *ſecond* thing that we are here to conſider, that by our delay we ſuffer our ſins to grow not only in *number*, but in *ſtrength* too: and as it

is

is eaſier to repent of a *few* ſins than *many*; ſo muſt it needs be a far *harder* task to conquer *many* ſins in their *full ſtrength*, than a *few*, and *weaker* too. Every one knows by woful experience, if ever he have attempted to get the maſtery of his ſin, what *ſtrength* every ſin gains in us by our long *accuſtoming* of our ſelves to it; and how much eaſier it is to leave off the practice of any ſin, after but *once* or *twice* committing it; than after that by frequent committing of it, it is become *habitual*, and in a manner *natural* to us; and, when we have by *cuſtom* brought our ſelves to that paſs, that we ſeem to our ſelves to ſtand in as much need of our *ſin*, as we do of our *food* and *raiment*, and can as little be *content* without it. 'Tis eaſie to pluck up a tender Sprout of the firſt or ſecond years growth; but this, by letting it ſtand and grow, is every year harder and harder to do; and at laſt, when 'tis become a ſtrong Tree, impoſſible for the ſtrongeſt man to do. 'Tis eaſie to quench a ſmall ſpark that's but juſt taking hold of the Thatch; but 'tis not ſo eaſie to extinguiſh the fire, when the whole Houſe is on a flame. It may be no difficult matter to cure a little Sore at firſt; but it will be more hard to do it, when by delay 'tis grown into a hollow and filthy Ulcer; and hardly poſſible, if it come to a Cancer, or a Gangreen. How ſtrange a

thing is it then, that we ſhould delay our Repentance, the only cure of a diſeaſed and ulcerous Soul, till by delay we become almoſt paſt poſſibility of being cured! *Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the Leopard his ſpots? Then may ye alſo do good, that are accuſtomed to do evil*, Jer. XIII. 23.

3. As our work by delay grows *greater, ſo our ſtrength for ſuch a work, grows leſs*; and that makes it ſtill harder. The more *ſick* a man groweth, or the longer he lieth under his Diſeaſe, the *weaker* he groweth too, and the leſs ſtrength he hath to help himſelf. Tho we are all corrupt enough by nature; and as we are ſo of our ſelves, by much too weak to conquer any Luſt without the help of *ſupernatural* Grace: yet our giving way to our *natural corruption*, and our indulging our ſelves in our own *weakneſſes*, makes us ſtill weaker and weaker. He that exerciſeth not his ſtrength, by degrees loſeth it. And he that inſtead of *reſiſting* his Enemy as well as he can, layeth himſelf down at his feet to be *trod* upon, will find that he hath then leſs ſtrength to *raiſe* himſelf up, than he had at firſt to *ſtand* his ground. In like manner, he that, inſtead of making what *defence* he is able, ſtands ſtill, and lets his Enemy give him *wound* after *wound* as long as he will; if he have a mind to ſave himſelf at laſt, may find that he hath

not

not *ſtrength* enough left him, either to *fight*, or *run away*. In *three* things principally a man's *natural ſtrength* to withſtand a temptation to wickedneſs, or to change an ill Cuſtom for a better, may ſeem to conſiſt, 1. *In the conduct of natural Conſcience.* 2. *In the vertue of deliberate Conſideration.* 3. *In the hope of Succeſs.* But by delaying our Repentance, we loſe more and more of this ſtrength daily.

*Firſt*, Though our Natures be ſtrongly *biaſſed* towards Evil, and we do mightily of our ſelves *incline* that way; yet is there ſuch a thing in us as the *light of Nature*; whereby we ſee, in many things, that we go wrong, and walk ſo, as it very much misbecometh us to do. We yet retain ſome *Principles of Morality*, and *natural Notions* of *Good* and *Evil*, *Honeſty* and *Diſhoneſty*, *Decency* and *Indecency*, which are not quite erazed, nor worn out. And our *Conſciences* are ready to check us for doing contrary to our *Nature*, and to reproach us with the *unreaſonableneſs* and *ſhamefulneſs* of acting ſome evil things. But when we long neglect to hearken to our *Reaſon*, and to obey the dictates of it; yielding to our brutiſh *Affections*, and giving them the ſole command of us: we by degrees forget we have any ſuch thing as *Reaſon* to direct us, and our *Conſciences* fall aſleep, having nothing to

do; our unruly *Luſts* ruling us in every thing. We can ſee nothing *unhandſome* in what we are fondly in *love* with, nor can we any more be *aſhamed* of what we have long *accuſtomed* our ſelves unto; eſpecially when we find we are not *alone* in any of our ſins, but find *Companions* enough to embolden us in any wickedneſs. *Were they aſhamed when they had committed abomination? Nay, they were not at all aſhamed, neither could they bluſh,* Jer. VI. 15. The Sinner, after a little time, begins to think it a piece of *bravery* to be *impudent*, and to *glory* in his *ſhame*; and nothing muſt be thought *unreaſonable*, or *undecent*, that he hath a mind to do. Thus our fooliſh Hearts are more and more *darken'd*, and our Conſcience *ſeared* as with a hot iron, 1 *Tim.* IV. 1.

And when it is ſo with us, that our *Reaſon* bears no ſway for the tyranny of our *Luſts*; there can be no help from *Conſideration*, becauſe there can be no ſuch thing to any purpoſe; this being the proper work of *Reaſon* uningaged by *affection*, and at *liberty* to do its office. Or if ſometimes *Conſcience* be a little ſtartled upon any occaſion, and begin to be reſtleſs, and ſet our *thoughts* on work a-while; yet alas, the condition, which by delaying our Repentance we bring our ſelves into, is ſo *ſad* and *frightful*, that we can-

cannot indure to *think much* of it; but preſently turn our thoughts another way, and buſie them about ſomething more *pleaſant* to us. Indeed moſt of us have learn'd well enough, how to keep our ſelves from all *ſerious Conſideration* of either the *unreaſonableneſs*, *ſhame*, or *danger* of our ſinful ways; being always ſo *buſie* about the Affairs of the *World*, or our *Vanities*, or in making proviſion for the fleſh to fulfil the luſts thereof, that we are ſeldom at *leiſure* to think much on any thing elſe.

*Laſtly*, By long continuing in our ſins, and giving way to our Lufts, we give them ſo much the maſtery and dominion over us, that when at any time we are able to *conſider* a little in what a wretched State we are, and begin to have ſome thoughts of getting into a better; we find our ſelves ſo faſt *hamper'd* by them, and that they have taken ſuch ſtrong hold of us, that an *extraordinary ſtrength* is neceſſary to break looſe from them. Hereupon our *Courage* quite fails us, and we have no *hopes* at all, that ever we can be able to recover our ſelves out of the ſnare, wherein we have ſuffered our ſelves to be ſo much intangled; all our *ſpirits* therefore ſink down into *Deſpair*; and we are not willing to labour (as we fear) in vain, or to diſquiet our ſelves any longer, about what we imagine paſt all help.

help. O that we could be brought in time to *Conſider*, how by delay we are apt to be perfectly *infatuated*, and as it were, *inchanted*, having no uſe of *Reaſon* or *Conſideration*; no *Courage* left us to attempt our Freedom, or *Hope* to obtain it; but lye in our ſlavery without any *Senſe* of our vile Condition, and without either *Wit* or *Strength* ever to come out of it.

4. As by Delay our *Work* grows *greater*, and our *Strength leſs*; *ſo our time is every day ſhortned*; and tho we have both more to do, and leſs Skill and Ability to work, yet have we *leſs time* for our work. The more time we have already ſinned away, the leſs we are ſure is behind to Repent, ſerve God, and provide for our Souls in. Tho we may know how much we have had already to an ill purpoſe as we have abuſed it, yet we know not how little, or whether any at all, will be granted us for a better. We are ſure, That what is yet to come, cannot be very long, becauſe ſo much is already gone; and yet put both together, were it poſſible, all would have been ſhort enough for the work we had to do in it. Now if a work be ſo great, that it cannot be done perfectly, and as well as it ſhould be done, tho a man take the whole day to it, is it not a madneſs to drive it off, hoping it may be done well enough in one or two of the

the laſt hours of the day? He that hath the loſt time of many Years to redeem, had need to ply his buſineſs very cloſe indeed, if he hope to do it in a few days. Can we think that our corrupt hearts and minds will be throughly *changed* and *cleanſed*, all our ſinful deſires and affections quite *altered*, our whole Converſation *reformed*, every evil habit *broken off*, every luſt *mortified*, and the whole man *renew'd*, all Graces *acquired*, Sanctification *compleated*, and every neceſſary Duty *perform'd* all on a ſudden, in a moment of time? If the work be ſo *eaſie*, and ſo *little* time will ſerve to do it in, the more is our *Shame* and *Guilt* both, and the leſs *excuſable* are we, that we have done all no ſooner, having had ſo much time already to do it in.

And yet ſuppoſing all might be done in ſo little time, and we might repent ſufficiently and ſavingly, of a long wicked life, in ſome ſmall part of it towards the end; it ought to be conſidered, That a little time will hardly be enough for a man to try and be well aſſured of the *Sincerity* of his Repentance; and yet we know, that if it be not *ſincere*, it will do us no good; and till we *know* it is *ſincere*, it can afford us little *Comfort*. He that repents earlieſt, ſhall now and then meet with Temptations to *doubt* whether he hath *ſincerely repented* or no; and it will coſt him ſome pains

to

to *ſearch* into his own heart, and to make himſelf in any good and comfortable meaſure ſure of it. And to find this, is the only thing that muſt be the *comfort* of his *old age*, and the *ſweetneſs* of his *Dying thoughts*. But he that *defers* his Repentance to the *later* part of his Life, if then he may Repent unto *Salvation*, yet may he find the time much too ſhort for him very *comfortably* to aſſure himſelf that he hath done ſo indeed; and therefore though he may Repent, poſſibly he may not be able ſo well to know it, as not to go out of this World with many *fears* and *doubts*, and much *uncomfortable diſtraction* of thoughts about it. And though this may poſſibly be the caſe of ſome, who have lived a *life of Repentance*; yet is it not a thing a man would chooſe, or that he ſhould not do what he can to prevent, as I am ſure he that delayeth his Repentance doth not. He that *lives well*, may through the *tenderneſs* of his *Conſcience*, and *jealouſy* of *himſelf*, die ſomewhat *uncomfortably*; but he that *lives ill* almoſt as long as he lives, I think muſt needs do ſo, if he be not ſo *dozed* or *ſtupified* with his diſeaſe, that he cannot be *ſenſible* that he is a dying; or elſe have the favour of ſome extraordinary *Revelation*, which ſuch an one of all men hath leaſt reaſon to hope for.

5. For

5. For he that long delayeth his Repentance, hath reaſon enough to fear, that he ſhall have *leſs Aſſiſtance* hereafter for this great work, than now he may have. All the helps we can hope for, come from the *Holy Spirit* of God, without whoſe *ſpecial* Grace we ſhall never do any thing that is acceptable to him, or available to our own Salvation. We are too weak of our ſelves to cleanſe our ſelves from all filthineſs of Fleſh and Spirit, and to perfect Holineſs: It is God that worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleaſure. Now that man muſt have a ſtrange meaſure of unreaſonable confidence, that thinks he hath the *Grace* of God at his Command; and can make himſelf ſure to have it juſt when he ſhall call for it; or that the longer he hath rejected it, the greater meaſures of it ſhould be beſtow'd upon him. Is this the way to oblige God to be more liberal of his *Grace* unto us hereafter, to turn his *Grace* already given us into *wantonneſs*? Is to Diſhonour him as long as we can, the beſt way to aſſure us of his help in time of need? What is it then, whereby any one can poſſibly provoke God to withdraw or withhold his Grace from him? What needs any one care how he *lives*, if he can be ſure of *Grace* enough to ſave him at any time before he *die*? And if he cannot be ſure to have *Grace*

*enough*

*enough* at any time when he pleaſeth before he die, how dare he delay his Repentance any one day of his life, leſt he ſhould die before the next day? Certainly that perſon that delayeth his Repentance in expectation of *Grace*, when he ſees his own time to call for it; hath a confidence grounded on ſomething elſe than the Holy *Scripture*. Far be it from us to *limit* the *infinite Goodneſs* of God. His *Mercies* as well as his *Judgments* are unſearchable, and his ways paſt finding out. *Extraordinary favours* may be *granted* to ſome, but are not to be *relied* on by any. I hope God doth give Grace at laſt to many who have long refuſed it; but I know not where he hath promiſed that he will offer it again to them that refuſe it when 'tis offered. If therefore he that delays his Repentance in hope of *Grace* to Repent hereafter, meet with the Grace he hoped for, he hath cauſe to be *extraordinary thankful* for an *unpromiſed Mercy*; but if any one expect to have ſuch an *extraordinary Mercy*, he hath great reaſon to be humbled for ſo *groundleſs a preſumption*. For this is not the *ordinary* method of ſaving Sinners, which God hath made us acquainted with: and certainly he makes too bold with God Almighty, that expects he ſhould bring him to Heaven by any other way than by that which he hath pointed out unto him to walk

walk in; or who hopes for that assistance which he never promis'd, refusing to make use of that which he hath assured him of if he will now accept it. God hath said, that *whosoever hath*, or makes good use and improvement of the Grace already given, *to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: But whosoever hath not*, or makes not a wise improvement of what God hath given, to the Donor's Glory and his own Salvation, *from him shall be taken away even that he hath*, Matth. XIII. 12. God *ordinarily*, as well as *justly*, leaves such men to grow *worse* hereafter, who are not willing to grow *better* now. He withdraws his Holy Spirit from them, who have long *resisted* and *grieved* him. They who are not now willing to recover themselves out of the snare of the Devil, having been taken captive by him at his will, are deservedly left in the slavery they delight in. God saith unto them, *Hearing ye shall hear, and not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive*, Matth. XIII. 14. He leaves them to Satan to *blind their eyes, and harden their hearts, lest they should be converted, and Christ should heal them*, Joh. XII. 40. What a madness then must it be to delay our acceptance of the Grace which is now freely tender'd unto us, in hope of having it tender'd to us again, when we think it a fitter time for it;

when

when God hath declared that we do thereby provoke him to withdraw his Grace from us for ever, and never to make us another offer of it ſo long as we live.

6. *Laſtly*, Our *Impediments* and *Diſcouragements* are like to be *more* and *greater* the longer we delay: As a ſtone that's tumbling down the hill, the longer it continues rouling downwards, goes with the greater *force*, and is more hardly ſtopped; ſo our own *corrupt inclinations*, the longer we give way to them, carry us on with the more *earneſtneſs* in the old beaten paths of Sin towards Hell beneath, and the more difficult is it for us to recover our ſelves. Our *old acquaintance* and *brethren in iniquity*, the longer we continue in their Society and Friendſhip, cling ſo much the cloſer unto us; and uſe all their *art* and *power* to hold us faſt; ſo that 'tis always harder to break from them. The *Devil*, who before *emboldened* us to ruſh headlong upon any wickedneſs, without any check, or reſtraint of Conſcience, now fills our heads with *fears* and *jealouſies*, that our caſe is already become *deſperate*; and he that before perſuaded us it was too *ſoon*, now perſuades us 'tis too *late* to think of providing for our ſafety. The longer we continue in our *folly*, the more *fooliſh* we grow; and the leſs capable of being taught how to grow *Wiſe* unto *Salvation*.

And

And the wickeder we have been, and the more ſhamfully we have behaved our ſelves, the more aſhamed we grow to confeſs, that we have ſo long been *mad*, and *baſe*, and *brutiſh*, and to change our courſe of life for that which we have ſo long ſcorn'd as *fooliſhneſs*. There are ſo many *reſtitutions*, *reparations*, *ſatisfactions*, and *confeſſions* to be made to our injured Neighbours; ſo much *humbling* of our ſelves, and *Pardon* to be *begged* both of *God* and of all men whom we have offended; there is ſo much more *pains* to be taken and *diligence* to be uſed in redeeming our miſ-ſpent time, and fitting our Souls for Heaven; that very few who have lived long in wickedneſs, have *courage* to venture upon, and go through all this. Beſides, there are not very many perſons who by living long have leſs *buſineſs*, or fewer *cares* and *troubles* upon them of one ſort or other; however, they have thereby more *bodily infirmities*, and uſually leſs *vigour*, and *activeneſs of mind*. And how then can any one judg it fit to delay a moſt *neceſſary* duty, which might before have been done with leſs diſturbance, to ſuch a time as this, when we cannot hope for fewer *hindrances* and *diſcouragements* than we formerly had, if we find not many more, as is not unuſual? From all this, I ſuppoſe, it muſt now be very plain to every one, That as we are not ſure of

any *time* at all hereafter to Repent in, ſo neither can we be ſure if we ſhall have time, that we ſhall Repent in it. Nay, I think 'tis plain enough, that it is more likely of the two, *that we ſhall* not.

## SECT. VI.

### *The third* Danger *of* DELAY.

A *Third* danger of delaying our Repentance is this, That *we know not, if in ſome ſort we ſhall repent hereafter, whether our Repentance then will be accepted, and do us any good, or none.* And certainly this is a Point which any wiſe man would be well ſatisfied in, before he venture to defer his Repentance one moment longer. Let us therefore conſider well of it. Shall we defer our Repentance till it will do us no good? And are we ſure, that if we defer it *now*, it will do us good *hereafter?* If God will not accept of it, it can do us no good. And how are we ſure that God will then accept of it? Whether he will accept of it or not, I know not any one in the World beſides himſelf that can tell; and I do not remember that God himſelf hath any-where told us that he will. He hath told us, That without Repentance he will not ſave us; and he hath told us, That if we repent

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we ſhall be ſaved: But I cannot remember where he hath told us, That though we repent not now, but put it off to another time, we may then ſo repent, that he will accept of our Repentance, and ſave us.

It will be ſaid by thoſe who have no mind to repent yet, that God hath told us, That all who repent and believe the Goſpel ſhall be ſaved: and that if any man ſhall turn from all his wickedneſs which he hath committed, he ſhall live. And therefore, whether one repent early or late, if he repent at all, he ſhall be ſaved. Now I very readily and gladly grant what God in his Word hath told us to our great encouragement and comfort, if we will make a right uſe of it: That CHRIST JESUS came into the World to ſave Sinners, and thoſe very great Sinners too; and ſuch as had continued very long in a ſtate of ſin; and that we have no reaſon in the world to fear, that any one, how great a Sinner ſoever he hath been, ſhall be rejected of him, if he unfeignedly repent and believe the Goſpel. All this is a moſt comfortable truth, and we have great reaſon to be heartily thankful for it: But after all this, we had need to be very careful that we be not miſtaken in the meaning of thoſe two words, BELIEVING and REPENTING: and that we do not underſtand by them any other things, than that very

*Faith* and *Repentance* unto which *Salvation* is promiſed. Now as ſome, I fear, take a *Faith*, that implieth not a *holy Life*, for a *ſaving Faith*; ſo ſome may take *Repentance*, that implies not a *holy Life*, for a *ſaving Repentance*. And it is to be greatly fear'd, that both theſe are miſtaken. And whoſo conſidereth thoſe deſcriptions of *Repentance* which have been already given from the words of the HOLY GHOST himſelf, will, I doubt not, ſee cauſe enough to fear the ſame that I do. I doubt not, but many who have long delay'd their Repentance, do at length *repent* in *very good earneſt* that they have done ſo fooliſhly; and I hope that ſome of them are accepted of God: but I do not think that *all* who *repent* in *earneſt*, of their wicked life paſt, and of their long and fooliſh delay, repent unto *ſalvation*; and it is hard for any one to know certainly whether any do or no. God hath not told us how long any of us may hold on in our ſins, and not finally exclude our ſelves thereby from the benefit of *Repentance*; neither hath he told us, that I know of, that he will accept of the Repentance of that man, who hath to the latter end of his life wilfully delay'd it, in hopes of finding then both *time* and *grace* enough for it. But he hath told us enough to make us *fearful*, leſt he ſhould not. There are ſeveral Paſſages

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of *Holy Scripture* that may well *affright* us from *preſuming* on it; but not one that gives the leaſt *encouragement* or *countenance* to it. God frequently *threatens* wilful Delayers of their Repentance, either to *cut them off ſuddenly*, or to deliver them up to a *hardened heart*; but I cannot find, that he *promiſeth* them *Grace* hereafter, who will not hearken to his *preſent Call*; or that he will accept of them in *their own* time. Thus we read, —*He that being often reproved, hardeneth his neck, ſhall ſuddenly be deſtroy'd, and that without remedy*, Prov. XXIX. 1. *Happy is the man that feareth always; but he that hardeneth his heart, ſhall fall into miſchief*, Prov. XXVIII. 14. *He that deſpiſeth the riches of God's goodneſs, and forbearance, and long-ſuffering, not knowing that the goodneſs of God leadeth him to repentance, after his hardneſs and impenitent heart, treaſureth up unto himſelf wrath againſt the day of wrath*, Rom. II. 4, 5. Thoſe *who liked not to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them up to a reprobate mind*, Rom. I. 28. But very terrible indeed are theſe following Sayings of the *Holy Ghoſt* in *Scripture*, Heb. VI. 4, &c. *It is impoſſible for thoſe who were once enlightened, and have taſted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghoſt, and have taſted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come; if they*

*ſhall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance: ſeeing they crucify to themſelves the Son of God afreſh, and put him to an open ſhame. For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dreſſed, receiveth bleſſing from God: but that which beareth thorns and briers, is rejected, and is nigh unto curſing; whoſe end is to be burned.* Add hereunto that other place of the ſame Epiſtle, *Heb.* X. 26, *&c. If we ſin wilfully after we have received the knowledg of the truth, there remaineth no more ſacrifice for ſin, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation which ſhall devour the adverſaries. He that deſpiſed Moſes's law, died without mercy under two or three witneſſes; of how much ſorer puniſhment, ſuppoſe ye, ſhall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the Covenant, wherewith he was ſanctified, an unholy thing; and hath done deſpight unto the Spirit of Grace?* 'Tis true, theſe places of this Epiſtle are commonly interpreted of *Apoſtacy* from the *Faith of Chriſt* to *Judaiſm* or *Idolatry*; and it may be they were ſome ſuch *Apoſtates* that gave the *Apoſtle* an occaſion of writing this; yet I think, that hardly any conſidering man will deny, that they are to be extended as well to all thoſe who *reſolutely* lead a life quite *contrary*

*trary* to the *Goſpel* of *Chriſt*, notwithſtanding that in *words* they profeſs themſelves to be *Chriſtians*; ſeeing all ſuch do equally, with the other, *deſpiſe* and *trample* on the *Goſpel* and *Covenant* of *Chriſt*. The ſame *Apoſtle*, *Heb.* III. 7, *&c.* propounds unto *Chriſtians* the Example of the *Iſraelites* in the Wilderneſs, to take warning by in this caſe. *To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderneſs: When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and ſaw my works forty years. Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and ſaid, They do always err in their heart; and they have not known my ways. So I ſware in my wrath, they ſhall not enter into my reſt. Take heed, brethren, leſt there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God: but exhort one another daily, whilſt it is call'd to day; leſt any of you be hardened through the deceitfulneſs of ſin.* Let us moreover read with trembling what we find to this purpoſe in the Firſt Chapter of the *Proverbs*. There we ſhall ſee the method that God uſually takes with Sinners. *Firſt*, he graciouſly and earneſtly *invites* them to *Repentance*, v. 22. *How long ye ſimple ones, will ye love ſimplicity; and the ſcorners delight in ſcorning, and fools hate knowledg? Turn you at my reproof; Behold I will pour out my ſpirit unto you,*

*I will make known my words unto you.* But Sinners turn their deaf ear to this, and make no haſte to return, though they ſee God in haſte to do them good. *How long?* ſaith he. 'Tis yet time enough, ſay they. But how doth God reſent ſuch an Anſwer? *v.* 24. he tells them this; *Becauſe I have called, and ye refuſed; I have ſtretched out my hand, and no man regarded: but ye have ſet at nought all my counſel, and would none of my reproof; I will alſo laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh.* Well, but ſuppoſe they begin now at laſt to conſider, what danger they are in; and repenting of their ſimplicity, folly and obſtinacy, call upon God for help; hear now what God ſaith to this too; *v.* 28. *Then ſhall they call upon me, but I will not anſwer; they ſhall ſeek me early, but they ſhall not find me. For that they hated knowledg, and did not chuſe the fear of the Lord. They would none of my counſel, they deſpiſed my reproof; therefore ſhall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices.* What ſaith *Job* of the Hypocrite, *Job* XXVII. 9. *Will God hear his cry when trouble cometh upon him?* He asks the queſtion, and God himſelf hath anſwer'd it; *Ezek.* VIII. 18. *Though they cry in mine ears with a loud voice, yet will I not hear them.* And ſaith *Micah*, cap. III. *v.* 4. *He will even hide his face from them at that*

*that time, as they have behaved themſelves ill in their doings.* Yea, ſaith God, *Iſa.* I. 15. *When ye ſpread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you; when ye make many prayers I will not hear.* So the *Pſalmiſt* tells us it fared with ſome that he was too well acquainted with; *They cried, but there was none to ſave them; even unto the Lord, but he anſwer'd them not.* And all this is very juſt and equal, and Sinners cannot expect to find any better treatment with God; *Zech.* VII. 13. *As he cried, and they would not hear; ſo they cried, and I would not hear, ſaith the Lord of hoſts.* Why ſhould he? Muſt vile Sinners have the command of God's Ear? And muſt the glorious Majeſty of Heaven and Earth wait on every filthy Wretch as long as he pleaſeth? and alway be ready at his beck, and come at his call? Hath not God waited to be gracious to us, begged and beſeech'd us from day to day, even from our infancy to this hour; and muſt he yet be made to wait longer, and even as long as we pleaſe; and after we have ſlighted his Favours, and abuſed his Patience, and put what affronts we can upon his Divine Majeſty; can we expect that he ſhould not turn away from us in anger and indignation, and ſwear in his wrath, that we ſhall not ſee his face, nor hear his voice any more? I conclude with thoſe words

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of the Holy Ghoſt, 2 *Pet.* II. 20. *If after they have eſcaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledg of the Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt, they are again intangled therein, and overcome; the latter end is worſe with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteouſneſs, than after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment deliver'd unto them.*

When ſuch *Scriptures* as theſe are well conſider'd, we ſhall find, that a man hath great reaſon to doubt, whether a *late Repentance* will be *accepted* or no. Wonderful indeed is the Infinite Goodneſs of God to Sinners; he doth often *more*, but never *leſs* than he promiſeth; and he doth often a great deal *leſs* than he threatneth, and granteth unto us that time of *repentance*, which we had no reaſon to expect from him: but whilſt we magnify, as we are bound, the *Patience*, and *Long-ſuffering* of God; we muſt take heed how we forget his *Juſtice* and *Truth*; or how we ſpeak ſo of *thoſe*, that we know not how to reconcile what we ſay of them with what he himſelf hath ſaid of *theſe*. A very *late Convert* may be at laſt *converted*, and upon his *late converſion* ſhall be *accepted*: and I dare not ſay, that if he do not come in at the *firſt* or *ſecond* call, the door of Salvation ſhall be ſhut againſt him. I dare not ſay poſitively, that

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God will never grant Repentance unto life, to any one, who hath a *long time delay'd* his Repentance, after he is *convinced* of the neceſſity of it; or to keep the Commandments of God, after he hath *covenanted* and *engaged* himſelf in his *Baptiſm* ſo to do; or after he hath been often *put in mind* of his Engagement, and hath had many *warnings* to do his acknowledged duty; yea, or that hath *preſumptuouſly* delay'd his Repentance, *purpoſing*, and *hoping* for *time* to repent afterward. I know not how much mercy God may have in ſtore, that he hath not acquainted us with: but I dare not *rely* upon what I know not of. I know not what *extraordinary* things God's infinite goodneſs may bring to paſs; but becauſe they are *extraordinary*, I dare not *venture* ſo great a thing as my Salvation upon them, ſeeing what is *extraordinary*, may, for ought I know, never be. Becauſe God *extraordinarily* fed the *Iſraelites* with *Manna*, and can feed me ſo too if he pleaſe; I dare not neglect my *common Bread* when I may have it, in expectation of ſuch another Miracle. And I cannot ſee, but it is altogether as fooliſh a thing as that would be, to preſume on the *extraordinary* favours of God to *long-impenitent* Sinners; neglecting to follow the *common Rules* of *holy life*, and of keeping in God's favour, which he hath given me in his Word,

Word. Shall we neglect the *expreſs Conditions* of his *gracious Promiſes*, preſuming on an *extraordinary* thing never *promiſed*, which is, that the *thing promiſed* ſhall be given to him, that never obſerved the *Conditions* on which it was promiſed to be given? If we *repent* when we are called to it, and continue all our life-long in a *ſtate of Repentance*, repenting always of our ſins as we commit and diſcover them, and endeavouring as much as we can to avoid them for the future; we may be very ſure of mercy and acceptance, becauſe it is *promiſed* to all that do ſo. But this I moſt confidently ſay, That he who being call'd often to repentance, wilfully delayeth it from time to time, thinking it always ſoon enough to leave off ſinning hereafter, and to ſerve God towards the end of his life; and that his repentance will come time enough then to find acceptance; reckons, as we ſay, without his Hoſte, and preſumeth on that which he cannot find that God hath promiſed him; and therefore hath cauſe enough to fear that his repentance may come too late, and it will not prove the Repentance which God made the condition of his Promiſe: eſpecially, when he conſiders withal, how God hath expreſs'd his diſlike of all delays, and what ſevere things he hath ſaid againſt the delaying Sinner in his Word. Is it not ſtrange, that

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one who ſees that there is no promiſe of Salvation, but to the *penitent liver*; and hears many Threatnings denounced againſt ſuch as *delay* to accept of the Invitation of God to repentance; ſhould yet be confident, that after he hath by his wilful delays, declared as much as a man can do without ſaying it with his mouth, that he hath no mind at all to ſerve God, but accounts any little portion of his time, not knowing how ſhort it will prove, enough, if not too much for him; he ſhall yet be accepted of God at laſt, and rewarded by him too? He holds out as long as he can againſt God, and yet hopes that God will readily grant him his own terms, when he can hold out no longer.

I would to God we could be perſuaded to conſider a little impartially with our ſelves, what kind of thing ſuch a *late Repentance*, after long and *wilful delays*, is like to prove: eſpecially when it hath been delay'd till our laſt *ſickneſs*, and we begin to fear we have but ſome few days, or weeks at moſt, to live. What reaſon can we find to perſuade us, to think ſuch a Repentance to be the true Repentance, to which Pardon and Salvation are promiſed? When we would by no means be perſuaded to repent ſo long as we ſaw it probable we might live ſome years longer, how is it imaginable that we then repent upon any other

other motive, than a preſent fear of ſpeedy damnation? And can this be thought a ſaving Repentance? God's great *love* and *kindneſs* a thouſand ways exerciſed towards us; His *Soveregn Authority* over us, and *Commands* laid upon us; His *Mercy* and *Bounty*, His *Wooings* and *Beſeechings*, His *Invitations* and *Promiſes*, the wonderful *love* of our *Bleſſed* JESUS, witneſſed by his *Humiliation*, *Sufferings*, and *bloody Death*, for our Redemption; nay, all the moſt dreadful *Threatnings* of an *Almighty* and moſt *Righteous* offended God againſt *impenitent* Sinners, had no force at all upon us, ſo long as we had either *youth*, or *health*, or *proſperity*: Nothing could prevail with us, till we found our ſelves declining apace towards the *Grave*, and fear'd we were juſt about to ſink down into *Hell*: and what elſe could it be that then put us upon thoughts of repenting more than at other times, but *fear* of being tormented? And then what can our Repentance at ſuch a time ſignify more than this, That as we had always loved our Sin better than God, as long as we were in a capacity of enjoying it; ſo now that we cannot enjoy it any longer, and fear we are going to be puniſh'd for it, though we love it as well as ever, and would act it over again, were we able; yet we are ſorry we have been ſo fooliſh, as to bring our ſelves into this *danger* that we

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now apprehend our ſelves to be in. And ſeeing we can have no more pleaſure in this World, which we are now leaving much againſt our will; yet we love our eaſe ſtill, and are willing to do what we can to eſcape Eternal Pains, and we ſtartle at the thoughts of going impenitent, as we have always been, to meet with our provoked Judge in the other World; and we would fain ſtep back again from the mouth of Hell; and therefore we fall a praying and begging God with ſad ſighs, and ſorrowful tears, either to pardon us, and take us to Heaven, if we muſt go hence; or elſe to ſpare us a-while longer; which if he will do, we reſolve to live in obedience to his Laws as long as we live? Are not moſt Malefactors thus penitent, after a ſevere Sentence is given, and they ſee no remedy but it muſt be preſently executed upon them? And yet it is not becauſe their hearts are *changed*, but becauſe they are *terrified* with the puniſhment they are to bear; not that they are on a ſudden faln in love with a vertuous life, but becauſe they muſt now live no longer. How a man ſhould attain to ſuch a degree of confidence, as to hope that God will accept of a Repentance which is not at all for his ſake, but merely for our own; which hath nothing of the *love* of *God* or *Goodneſs* in it, but only a *fear* of *Judg-*

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*ment* and *Hell-fire*; no *change* at all of our *Affections* from *Sin* to *Holineſs*, from *Earth* to *Heaven*, from our carnal *Selves*, to *God*; but only a *change* of our *Security* into *Fear*, and of our *Pleaſure* into *Sorrow*; and it may be of our *Minds* into a *very ſerious Reſolution* to live better, if we ſhall live any longer; and that merely becauſe we are *afraid* that we ſhall live no longer: how any one ſhould think ſuch a *forced Change* as this, an *acceptable Repentance*, I muſt confeſs I know not, unleſs he have forgotten, not only his *Bible*, but his *Reaſon* too.

There are ſome things, as *uſeful* as they are *eaſie*, to be obſerved in *dying* People, who have ſpent their days in wickedneſs. And I think they are enough to affright any one from thinking any longer of having the *benefit* of a *Death-bed Repentance*.

*Firſt*, It is too eaſie to obſerve, That often ſuch a Sinner's *Conſcience* is quite dead within him (I ſpeak of ſome, not of all) a long time before he dieth, and never reviveth again ſo long as he liveth. He is given up to a *reprobate mind*, and his heart turn'd to *ſtone*, and nothing that ſhould move him to Repentance can make any impreſſion upon it. Yea, 'tis ſomewhat a rare thing, to ſee an *old*, *habitual*, *cuſtomary* Sinner ever come to any

any true *ſenſe* of *Religion*, his *Duty*, his *Sin*, or his *Danger*; or ever to concern himſelf at all about *Eternity*. Even upon his *Death-bed*, whatever care he takes about his *Body*, *Eſtate* and *Family*, his *Soul* ſeems as much forgotten by him, as if he had none at all to take care of. It is no uncommon thing to ſee an *old Sinner* die thus *unconcerned* what ſhall become of him.

*Secondly*, It is as eaſie to obſerve in ſome of theſe dying Perſons, who ſeem to make ſome little ado about their *future State* when they are about to die; that though they are deſirous of good *Advice*, and ſend for the *Miniſter* to *talk* to them, and *pray* for them; and confeſs to him ſome few of their moſt *notorious* Faults; yet are they the *confidenteſt* Perſons in the World of their *pardon*; 'tis not eaſie to perſuade them that their caſe is very dangerous; but after they have confeſs'd they are great Sinners, and have been pray'd for, as though all were done; they paſs off the Stage of this World as unconcernedly, as if they had never acted any ill part thereon.

*Thirdly*, It hath been very often obſerv'd, that thoſe of them who in ſome very dangerous ſickneſs have made more ado than ordinary, have cried out very bitterly of their paſt wickedneſs and folly; have ſhed many tears, and poured out many earneſt Prayers,

and have made many Vows to God, and Promiſes to Men of leading a new and holy life, if God would reſtore them to health; have yet very ſhortly after their recovery, forgotten all this, as if it had never been; returning with the Dog to his vomit, and with the Sow that was waſhed, to her wallowing in the mire. Shewing plainly, that though they might be in *earneſt*, yet was it but for *fear*; and how little credit is to be given to ſuch *forced Repentances!*

*Fourthly*, 'Tis to be obſerved, That whatever elſe theſe *old* and *hardened* Sinners are wont to do upon their Death-beds, which may look like repentance; they are not eaſily perſuaded to confeſs any very *foul* Sin, which is not ſo *notorious*, that they cannot deny it; and then too, it ſhall be *excuſed* as well as they can, inſtead of being *aggravated* as it ought to be. With much more difficulty can they be perſuaded to make *reſtitution* of all they have ill gotten, or ſo much as to *confeſs* their *Frauds*, and *wicked Arts* of injuring others. Rarely do they ſend for thoſe whom they have *offended*, *humbling* themſelves, *confeſſing* their Faults, *begging* their *pardon*, and making them all the *ſatisfaction* they can before they die. And what kind of Penitents are theſe?

*Laſtly*,

*Laſtly,* If any of theſe *old Sinners* at laſt be touch'd to the quick, and pricked at the heart with a ſharp ſenſe of their ſinful Vileneſs; it is not hard for the malicious and cunning *Tempter,* to bring them into *deſpair,* ſo as it ſhall be impoſſible for any one to *comfort* them, and in vain to *counſel* them. Their own *long-abuſed Conſciences* do now begin to revenge themſelves upon them, for neglecting them ſo long; and they know 'tis ſo *juſt* a thing for God now to ſerve them, as they have ſerved him, that they conclude it in vain to ſeek for *pardon* and *mercy.* He that ſtands by the Bed-ſide of theſe old Sinners, when they are on their laſt Bed; may eaſily obſerve all this that I have ſaid of them: and that but a few of them, in compariſon, die ſo, as that one has any great encouragement to ſay their *repentance* was any thing elſe, but the *grief* and *remorſe* of a heart oppreſs'd with *fear* of *imminent danger,* whereinto they find themſelves brought by their own folly and perverſeneſs.

It is eaſie on the other ſide to obſerve the death of the *truly pious Chriſtians* to differ very much from the death of this ſort of men; I mean, as often as in their ſickneſs they have *time* and *freedom* of mind to ſhew what kind of ſpirit they are of. In many reſpects, as the one dieth, ſo dieth the other: *theſe* may

be cut off by a *ſudden ſtroke*, they may die of a *diſtracting* or *ſtupifying* Diſeaſe, as well as the *other*; and the *frame* of their *hearts* is to be ſeen only in their *life*, and not in their *death*. However, only thoſe few dying Perſons, who have in their health conſcientiouſly endeavour'd to *live* a truly Chriſtian life, and have their Repentance not to *begin*, but only to *finiſh* with their life upon their *Death-bed*, ſhew, if they have *time*, and *ſtrength*, and *liberty* to ſhew it, that they die indeed like *ſincere Chriſtians*: For either they end their days of trouble in much ſpiritual *joy* and *comfort*, reflecting ſweetly on the mighty powers of *Divine Grace*, whereby they have been carried *victoriouſly* through all the Temptations of the Devil, the World, and the Fleſh, and in the raviſhing expectation of entring ſpeedily into the joy of their Lord: Or being Perſons of *tender Conſciences*, and deeply *wounded* in ſpirit with the ſenſe of all their own *imperfections* and *failings*, they ſhew all the ſigns of an *humble*, *broken* and *contrite* heart; and cloſe up their time with the *Prayers* and *Tears*, *Sighs* and *Groans* of a devout Soul, longing to be made perfectly holy in Heaven with God; and endeavouring to that end, thus to *compleat* and *perfect* all their *Repentances* on Earth.

Some

Some will poſſibly ask, If there be ſo little truſt to be put in a *very late*, and *Death-bed Repentance*, Why the *Miniſters* of *Chriſt*, when they are call'd to aſſiſt the Sick, do ſo earneſtly exhort even the moſt *notorious Sinners*, who have ſpent their *whole time* paſt in *wickedneſs*, to repent of their ſins; and *comfort* them with the *promiſes* of *Salvation*, if they do repent?

This *Queſtion*, I confeſs, deſerves to be conſider'd; both that the *Miniſter* may take heed that he go not beyond his Commiſſion in *comforting* the Sick; and that we may all learn in due time, how far we may build and *rely* on ſuch *Comforts* as men in ſuch a caſe can adminiſter unto us. And therefore I here in anſwer to it, ſay theſe things.

*Firſt*, We very earneſtly *exhort* the *worſt* of Sinners, even to the *laſt gaſp*, to *repent* of their ſins; becauſe, though we cannot aſſure them, that God will now at the laſt hour accept of their late Repentance, ſeeing he hath no-where, as was ſaid before, declared that he will; and though, by reaſon of what is ſaid in his Word concerning his ordinary method of dealing with Sinners, we are rather afraid that he will not: Yet we do not know the depth of God's Mercy, nor the riches of his Infinite Goodneſs; nor what he may be

pleas'd to do in an *extraordinary* way, if Sinners at last use *extraordinary endeavours*. And if by such *Motives*, and *Arguments*, and *Prayers* as we can use, God seem to work *mightily* on the spirit of the *dying* Sinner; though we dare not *assure* him of the life which God hath not *promised* to a Death-bed Repentance, and therefore we cannot be sure that he *will* give it: yet dare we not leave him to *despair*, because we know not but God *may* give it.

*Secondly*, We therefore exhort the *worst* of *dying* sinners to Repentance, and declare unto them the gracious and comfortable *Promises* which God in *Christ* hath made to all true *Penitents*; because God hath commanded us to Preach *Repentance* unto sinners without *exception*; and herein, as we *obey*, so we *imitate* our *Lord* and *Master* JESUS CHRIST, who ceased not to invite all sinners to *Repentance*, or to *promise* good things to the *Penitent*, even when he who knew the hearts of all men, knew that many of them to whom he Preach'd, would never repent, nor become capable of the good things promised. God hath bidden us exhort to Repentance; but he hath not told us, That we are to cease from exhorting any one that will hear us, so long as he liveth. We cannot therefore excuse our selves, if we do not all we can to render

render them who will not repent, *inexcuſable*; it will not be ſafe for us to leave them this Plea, That they wanted any *Means* or *Helps* at any *time*, that we could afford them.

*Thirdly*, We hold on to *exhort*, even to the *laſt*, becauſe how near unto Death ſoever the ſinner may ſeem to be, we know that the Lord of Life and Death can raiſe him up again; and we know not but he may do ſo, and let him live yet longer, to *compleat* the Repentance which may now be *begun*. God is pleaſed ſometimes by ſevere *Chaſtiſements*, and heavy *Afflictions*, to awake ſinners to Repentance, who had lived in ſin *ſecurely*, many years; and now when the ſinner ſeeth himſelf at the *Pit's brink*, and *Hell* opening its mouth to ſwallow him up, he may poſſibly think it fit to hearken to *counſels* of *ſafety*; tho no more can be ſaid, but *poſſibly* he *may yet be ſaved*. We know not, but now he may enter upon a Repentance, which tho it would do him no good, ſhould he now dye, may prove unto *Salvation*, if he recover, and live to bring forth the fruits of it; which God is yet able to make him do, and hath not told us that he will not do.

*Laſtly*, We to the very *laſt* exhort to Repentance, and mind dying ſinners of the *Promiſes* of God to *Penitents*; becauſe that whether it will then avail to Salvation, or no, yet

we are ſure enough it can do them no hurt. It is certainly *their* duty to *repent*, and ours to *exhort* them to it; and as it would hurt us to neglect our duty, ſo can it not hurt them to be minded of theirs: For ſinners to be made *ſenſible* of their ſins, and of this *aggravation* of them, That they have *deſpiſed* the *Comforts* and *Promiſes* of Mercy to the Penitent, is a good thing, whatever the end may be of ſuch ſinners. God is glorified by mens being brought to a *ſenſe* and *acknowledgment* of his *Authority* and *Goodneſs*, and of their own *Wickedneſs* and *Baſeneſs*, by their *confeſſing*, That in all that is brought upon them, *he is righteous*, and *they are wicked*. By mens *acknowledging* at laſt, That God hath been always *good*, eſpecially in his great *Patience* and *long forbearance* hitherto; and that he is now very *juſt* in his *Puniſhments*, for our obſtinacy, *glory* is given to God. And this ought to be done; and if this will not qualifie ſinners for *Pardon* and *Salvation*, 'tis however a part of their *duty*, and may, for ought we know, *mitigate* the Severity of their Sentence, and *leſſen* their Torments.

But now after this is ſaid, it is a very ſad thing, that men ſhould by *wilful delays* bring themſelves into this *uncomfortable* condition. And it is a very *afflicting* thing to every good Miniſter of Chriſt, to ſtand by the bed-ſide of

of thoſe dying perſons to whom he is able to ſpeak no more *Comfort* than all this amounts to. For *firſt*, He can ſpeak no *Comfort* at all, to the ſick perſon, but upon *ſuppoſition* that he is, what he finds too much cauſe to fear he is not, a *ſincere Penitent*; and this is very ſad. And *ſecondly*, He can ſpeak no *Comfort*, but on ſuppoſition of ſuch a Repentanee as the *ſick perſon* himſelf cannot *know*, (without ſome *extraordinary* means) that he now hath; and therefore cannot tell how to *apply* the *Comfort* to himſelf. And this is very ſad again. The *Sincerity* of ones *Repentance* cannot *ordinarily* be known to himſelf, but by the *fruits* of it in a *holy Life*; and by theſe, he that's now *dying*, can never *know* it. It is only ſuch a Repentance as would produce *Holineſs* of *Life*, if the ſick perſon ſhould recover, that is *Repentance* to *Salvation*; and when the ſinner on his Death-bed calls to mind how often his heart hath in this point *deceived* him; when he remembers how his *love* to ſin hath hitherto *conquer'd* all ſuch *Purpoſes* and *Reſolutions* of holy living; how often he hath heretofore upon the ſame, or ſome other *occaſion*, very *ſeriouſly* (as he thought) *reſolved*, as now he doth, and yet never kept his *Reſolution*; how ſhall he be able to aſſure himſelf, That he would keep it any better now, ſhould he yet live?

I hope

I hope what hath been already ſaid, is abundantly enough to convince us all, both that a ſinner can never repent too ſoon, and that he may drive it off till it be too late. And therefore ſeeing Repentance is altogether neceſſary to Salvation, it is a work that requires great *Haſte*, and admits of no *Delay*.

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## The Conclusion.

FRom what we have now proved, it may be too eaſie, I fear, for many of us to reflect very ſadly upon our ſelves. It is certainly, if theſe things be ſo as hath been ſaid, high time for us all to think, what we have been doing all the while we have already lived in the world, that we may know what we have yet to do, before we go out of it. 'Tis high time for us to remember, That we *muſt all appear before the judgment-ſeat of Chriſt, that every one may receive the things done, in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad*, 2 Cor. V. 10. We *muſt* appear, that's certain, there is no flinching or evaſion; *all* of us, without exception; and there will God *render to every man according to his deeds*, Rom. II. 6. When we call this to mind, do we not think our ſelves concern'd to enquire, How we are prepared to anſwer for

for our ſelves, at that moſt dreadful Tribunal? We ſee, that according to our deeds or behaviour in the body, or whilſt we here live, ſo we muſt then be doom'd to receive, either Eternal Reward, or Eternal Puniſhment; as is elſewhere plain enough. Are we able to plead for our ſelves, That we have lived a life of *Repentance*, *Faith*, and *new Obedience*? Then all will be well; through the *rich Mercy* of God, and *Merits* of our *Bleſſed* JESUS, Eternal Life is aſſured unto us. But if we cannot plead this, what will become of us? Know we how ſoon we muſt dye, or how we muſt dye? As we dye, ſo muſt we riſe to the *Judgment*. If we dye before we have lived a *life of holineſs*, our deeds have been *wicked*, and according to them, we ſhall receive *indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguiſh*; this is the reward of all that *do evil*. Will it excuſe us to ſay, Lord, we have lived wickedly 'tis true, but we were *ſorry* for it when we ſaw our ſelves like to dye, and *reſolved* to live a better life, if thou wouldſt have ſpared us a while longer? Or will it ſuffice us to ſay, Lord, we were always *reſolved* to *repent* and to *live well*, but thou didſt cut us off by death, before we had *begun* to do as we had reſolved, if thou wouldſt have let us live long enough? Alas, enough hath been already ſaid, to convince us of the folly of pleading thus;

thus; and it concerns us to grow wiſer very quickly, for we know not how little time we have to learn Wiſdom in. We can many of us ſay already, That our Glaſs is almoſt run out; and he whoſe Glaſs is but newly turn'd up, doth not know how few Sands are yet to run, e're it ſtop for ever. We that grow old, know, That if we have not repented, it's more than full time for us to begin; for begin now as ſoon as we will, we are ſure it is very *late*; and a *late Repentance* is a very *uncertain* thing to truſt to. If we have not by ſo long a *delay*, loſt our *Salvation*, it may be fear'd we have quite loſt the *Comfort* of being *ſure* of it as long as we live. They who are young, cannot but know, That every day they live, they grow older; what any day adds to the time paſt, ſo much it takes from the time to come; and the more they have lived, the leſs they have to live; and they are always ignorant, whether they have a day more to live or no. If then the young perſon have not yet repented, 'tis high time for him too, now to begin. If he ſtay any longer, his Repentance will be late too, and ſo much the leſs *comfortable*; and poſſibly it may be *too late*; for it is ten to one he ſhall dye before he be old; and if not, why ſhould he grudge himſelf the beſt of *Comforts* in *Old Age*, a *Conſcience* that can teſtifie that he hath repented, and kept

God's

God's Commandments from his youth up till then? I doubt not, but whether we be old or young, we are ſo well ſatisfied, at leaſt many of us, that Repentance is neceſſary to Salvation, that we would not willingly dye without it. And we could not be ſo eaſie within our ſelves, as we are, did we not either think our ſelves already penitent, or preſume we ſhall be ſo ſometime e're we go hence. I ſhall therefore now cloſe this Diſcourſe with a neceſſay *Caution*, leſt we miſtake that for Repentance, which is not; and an earneſt *Exhortation* to make more haſte to repent.

1. Let us take heed that we be not miſtaken in this great and neceſſary duty. A miſtake in a matter of ſo great importance, is very dangerous, and, I fear, as *common*, as *dangerous*. Corrupt Nature is ſo averſe from it, that it eaſily perſuades us to take ſomething that looks a little like it, for it, becauſe we find it more eaſie, and not wholly inconſiſtent with our ſin. And hence it comes to paſs, that we never repent to purpoſe, becauſe we perſuade our ſelves we have done ſo, when we have not. We are *ſenſible* that we are guilty of many ſins; and who is not ſo, that believes what he reads in Scripture? Can a *Drunkard*, or a *Swearer*, or a *Fornicator*, or *Adulterer*, or any *Prophane* and *Debauch'd* perſon

ſon chuſe but be ſenſible that he breaks the Laws of God, which there he reads? We are ſometimes a little *troubled* in our minds for ſuch ſins, and are *ſorry* that we have been guilty of them, and this moves us to fall down on our knees, and *confeſs* them to God, and to *beg* his *Pardon* for them, and to *promiſe* we will no more commit them. And it may be, we are then in good *earneſt*, and *ſeriouſly* purpoſe to perform our *Promiſes*, and we receive the *Sacrament* upon it, and ſo *ſeal* up our *Repentance*; and ſo our hearts are at reſt, and we conclude our *Peace* is made; and by this *haſty* Concluſion, we leave the moſt conſiderable part of the work undone; and we grow too ſoon *confident*, ever to be *ſure*; and *preſume* ſo quickly, That our condition is good, that we never uſe *Diligence* enough to make it good. He that thinks his Repentance quite finiſh'd, ſo long as he lives, is deceiv'd: It is the work of our life, and is not finiſh'd but with it: Whenever it was begun, it muſt continue till we dye: And it implies all this that here follows, which ſeems to be too little thought on by many, who think themſelves true Penitents.

*Firſt*, There muſt be a very *ſerious reſolution to live a Godly Life after the Commandments of God*: And ſuch a reſolution ſuppoſeth a due *Conſideration* of ſuch things as are the proper mo-

motives to it. A man must consider the *Nature* of *God*, and his *own nature* as he is *man*, made in the *Image* of God; whence it became his *natural* duty to continue *Holy as God is Holy*. He must consider God's *Absolute Authority* over him as his *Creator*, *Owner*, *Governour* and *Preserver*; and the natural *obligations* that are upon him as God's *Creature*, to Serve and Honour him according to his will. He must consider that the *design* of his *Creation* was, that God might Glorifie his own *Goodness* in making him a Creature capable of understanding so much of God as might enable him to *Glorifie* God on Earth, and be perfectly *Blessed* in the enjoyment of God for ever. All this must make him *sensible* both how *vile* and *degenerate*, how *unworthy* and *wretched*, how *filthy*, and how *miserable*, Sinning against God hath made him: And how being fallen from his *Holiness* and *Obedience*, so long as he continues in this *Sinful state*, he can have no hope ever to be *Happy*, but must lie under the *Wrath* of God: and unless he be *renewed* unto Holiness, the *Curse* which God laid on Sinners, which is that of *Eternal Torments*, must needs fall upon him. He must consider the admirable *Love* of God in sending him in this his Sinful and Miserable State, a *Saviour* to redeem him from destruction by the *Sacrifice* of his own most *Precious Blood*;

and

and to invite him by his *Gospel* to *Repentance* and *Faith*, and to *promise* him the assistance of his *Holy Spirit* of *Grace* to restore him to Holiness, and to fit him for the benefits of Redemption, the *Pardon* of his Sins, and *Eternal Happiness* with God in his Kingdom of Glory. Such considerations as these must beget in us a *deep* and *humble sense* of our *vileness* and *wretchedness*; a *godly sorrow* for behaving our selves so unworthily towards God, sinking much below the dignity which he gave us; a *holy Shame* and *indignation* against our selves for this; a *judging* and *condemning* our selves as worthy to perish, and to be punished everlastingly; and a most earnest *desire* of God's Mercy and Favour; a firm *belief* of all that he hath already done for us in *Christ*; fervent *Prayer* for the renewing and sanctifying Grace of the Holy Ghost, to qualifie us for a *full Pardon* and *eternal Salvation*: And *lastly*, an unfeigned *resolution* to endeavour henceforward to *mortifie* all our *lusts*, to *resist* all *temptations* to Sin, to *use* all the *means* of Holiness, to Serve God according to the rules of the *Gospel*; and so doing, to cast our selves upon the *Mercy* of God through the *merits* of our Blessed Saviour. Now all this is but our *first entrance* into a *state* of *Repentance*, which is also the only *State of Salvation* on Earth. This is that

which

which qualifieth persons of ripe age for *Baptism*; and this is that which *Baptized Infants* are obliged to by *Baptism* as soon as they come to years of understanding. And this, tho but the *beginning* of a *Penitent Life*, is enough for those who live no longer: And implieth in it a great deal, too little thought on by many. As *first*, A *change* of *mind and judgment*; our understanding being so far enlightned, that we judge otherwise of *God* and *our selves*, of *Heaven* and *Earth*, of *Good* and *Evil*, than we did before. We *prise* and *value God*, and *Heaven*, and *Holiness* above all things whatsoever, even life it self. And we cannot think well of our selves, nor value any thing in the World without these. *Secondly*, Such a *change* of *desire* and *will*, that all our desire is to please and honour God, and by that means to be restored to, and continue in his favour; and not to please our selves in any thing wherewith we know God is displeased. Our *wills* are resolved to consult no longer with Flesh and Blood, nor to be guided by our own corrupt inclinations and judgment, but wholly by the will of God, the Gospel of JESUS Christ, and the Grace of the Holy Spirit. *Thirdly*, Such a *change* of *life* and *endeavour*, that just now we set our selves in good earnest on the great work, daily mortifying and crucifying the Flesh with its

corrupt affections and lusts, and cleansing our selves from all filthiness of Flesh and Spirit, perfecting Holiness in the Fear of the Lord. This is the first *beginning of Repentance*; and if we have not done this, whatever we flatteringly think of our selves, we have it all yet to begin. And yet is this, I fear, a great deal more, than many who have a long time pleas'd themselves with a conceit that they are *Sincere Penitents*, have at any time yet well thought on.

*Secondly*, After this unfeigned resolution to live a Godly life, there must be a *constant care upon our Souls to make good this resolution*, and to carry on this change, thus happily begun, unto perfection. We must enter upon an habitual course of governing our Thoughts, Words and Actions, by the Word of God; of denying our selves in all the vile desires, sinful inclinations and lustings of corrupt Nature; and of using all fit means of subduing the Flesh unto the Spirit, and of growing in Grace and in the knowledg of our Lord Jesus Christ. And here again is much more than is, I fear, by all of us well thought on. As *First*, A constant *fixing our thoughts upon God* as much as we can, as always *present* with us, seeing and observing our whole behaviour; an Eye in all things to his Will and Commandments; being careful

to leave nothing undone that he hath enjoined us, to do nothing that he hath forbidden; to obſerve the preſcribed method and manner of doing every duty, as being always under his eye. *Secondly*, A very *diligent* and *frequent ſearching* into, and *reviewing* of all theſe things; obſerving narrowly what has been defective or amiſs any way, that we may be duly humbled, and all may be for the future amended. *Thirdly*, A conſtant *watching* and *ſtanding upon our guard againſt all Temptations*, whereby we may be drawn to commit evil, or neglect the good which is our duty, or to be ſlight and careleſs in the doing of it. *Laſtly*, A daily *uſing of the helps of reading, hearing, meditating, praying, converſing with pious company*, or whatever may be a means of preſerving our hearts in a *Penitent* and *holy* temper, and of encreaſing our love to God and Holineſs, and our hatred of Sin. He that is not careful to do this, as well as he can, is far from true Repentance.

*Laſtly*, After all our utmoſt care, becauſe of the weakneſs of our Nature, through incogitancy, and ſurprize, and a multitude of unavoidable buſineſs of this life, we ſhall find, that in many things we offend all. And therefore we muſt often *examine our ſelves*, and diſcovering our fallings as well as we can, we are ſtill as we diſcover them, to *repent* of

them; and concluding with our ſelves, that many of them may have ſlipt away, and eſcaped our obſervation; we are, together with thoſe we have found out, to pray for the pardon of our *ſecret Faults*. And here *firſt*, The *ſenſe* of our numerous Infirmities muſt make us continually more and more *humble* and *vile* in our own eyes, and take down all that confidence we are too apt to have of our ſelves, more and more convince us of the neceſſity of grace, and ſend us to God to implore, in the moſt humble and fervent manner, his ſtrength in our weakneſs. And *ſecondly*, We ought to *give glory to God* in humbling our ſelves *before the World*; and confeſſing by our *whole behaviour*, that we eſteem of our ſelves as vile Sinners, unworthy of God's Bleſſings, and ſuch as think it becomes us to humble our ſelves to all whom we have offended, to make them all the ſatisfaction we can, to ask them forgiveneſs, and beg their Prayers to God for his forgiveneſs of us.

All this is neceſſarily implied in the Duty of Repentance. And how eaſie is it then to ſee, that many who think themſelves Penitents, are miſtaken in their duty? Yea, how many of them who ſeem to be Perſons not of the worſt temper, but far better than the moſt of us are, never repent at all, merely becauſe they never yet well conſider'd what Repentance

tance is. It is no leſs than hath been ſaid; So that no one that hath not well *conſidered*, and unfeignedly *reſolved*, and is not always *careful* to avoid Sin, and lead a holy life; no one that *loveth* not God more than all things, or that *hateth* not Sin more than all Evils; no one that is not more *deſirous* to honour God, than to pleaſe himſelf; none that *examines* not his own heart and his ways often, or that *ſtudieth* not the Word of God conſtantly, or *ſhuns* not all Temptations carefully, or *reſiſts* them not ſtoutly; none that is *proud* of himſelf, or is not *deeply* and *humblingly ſenſible* of his own vileneſs; none that *continueth* in any *known* ſin, or *wilfully* and *ordinarily* omitteth any known duty; none, I ſay, that labours not as much as he can, to be a *good Chriſtian* in all things according to the *Goſpel* of *Chriſt*, is to account himſelf a true Penitent.

2. And now, if we find not our ſelves true Penitents yet, let us, as we value God's Honour, and our own Salvation, *make haſte* to be ſo. Oh what a wretched piece of folly is it to to caſt our whole happineſs upon a mere uncertainty! What an unaccountable madneſs is it, inſtead of making our Calling and Election ſure, to make them every day we live more and more uncertain to us? Is this all the kindneſs that we can afford our ſelves,

that we will rather venture to be miſerable for ever, than take a little pains in time to prevent it? Had we rather weep fruitleſly for our Torments, than weep ſavingly for our Sins? For a little brutiſh Pleaſure, which though we have to day, we are not ſure we ſhall have to morrow, ſhall we hazard the unexpreſſible Pleaſures of Eternity, which we may make ſure of to day, but make it a very doubtful point, if we delay to make ſure of them to day, whether we ſhall ever enjoy them, do what we can hereafter? Do we any of us know, how ſoon the Door will be ſhut upon us, and there ſhall be no entrance for us into Heaven? Why then will we imitate the *fooliſh Virgins*, and rather chuſe to *ſleep* away the opportunity, than ſeek to have our *Lamps* furniſh'd with *Oil* in due ſeaſon? If we be taken unprovided, we know it will be in vain at laſt to cry, *Lord, Lord, open unto us*; Chriſt's Anſwer will be ready, *Verily I ſay unto you, I know you not*, Matth. XXV. 12. Thoſe who have worn the Devil's Livery ſo long, Chriſt will not own at laſt for Perſons of his Retinue.

O why will we deal worſe with God, and our own Souls, than we are wont to do with any thing elſe of the meaneſt concern to us? When we are in any trouble of body or eſtate, we are in great haſte to be relieved; neither

delay

delay we to accept of help when 'tis firſt tendered to us. When any one offers us a good gift, or other conſiderable kindneſs, we are not wont to bid him ſtay till to morrow. What an untoward humour is this in us? God made haſte to reſtore fallen Man, and to comfort him with the promiſe of a *Saviour*; Our *Saviour* made haſte when the time was come to ſhed his precious Blood for our Redemption; The *Holy Ghoſt* hath not delay'd by the *Word* and *Miniſtry* to beſeech us to be reconciled to God. But we delay ſtill, as though, whatever elſe be, yet nothing that is meant to bring us towards *Heaven* and *Happineſs* were worth regarding.

Whilſt we delay our Repentance, we give the *Devil*, *our Adverſary*, all the *Advantages* he can deſire to have of us. The holy Angels of God would rejoice to ſee one of us repent, *Luke* XV. 7, 10. And had we rather gratify the Devil by our Damnation, than have the holy Angels rejoice at our Salvation? Whilſt we delay, the Devil needs not tempt us, nor ſeek to devour us; we take care to ſave him that labour, by wilfully continuing in his power; and if hereafter we ſhall think of repenting, we have already taken care that he ſhall not want matter for a temptation from our long impenitence. Yea, we give him ſo ſure hold of us, that we ſhall not eaſi-

ly break looſe from him. We have given him ſo long experience of our yielding temper, that he is never to ſeek how to fit our humour with a ſuitable Temptation; neither can he doubt of always prevailing, where he hath prevail'd ſo often. Hitherto he hath befool'd us, by perſuading us 'tis always too ſoon to grow wiſe; and having been fools ſo long, he will the more eaſily perſuade us hereafter, becauſe with a fairer colour of reaſon, that it is then too late.

How many of our temper hath the Devil got into Hell already, by perſuading them 'tis already too ſoon, till they find it too late? What would thoſe miſerable Souls, who have been thus befool'd into Torments, now give, if they had it, for ſuch an opportunity of repenting as we now have? O why then ſhould we now loſe the opportunity we have, and giddily venture thereby ſuddenly to fall into that remedileſs condition they are now in? The next day, or hour, for ought we know, may lodge us for ever with them in Hell; and then ſhall we have weeping, and wailing and gnaſhing of teeth for evermore. Thoſe tears of Repentance, which will not then quench, might now prevent thoſe unquenchable Flames from taking hold of us.

O that we could every day really imagine our ſelves juſt under the ſtroke of Death! and

that

that the apprehenſion thereof might awake us into a ſerious conſideration of that Eternal State we then muſt enter into! What haſte would we then be in to make as ſure as we could of eſcaping thoſe dreadful Torments, the very thoughts whereof ſeem torment enough? What ſtrange Agonies of Soul have many dying ſinners fallen into, who have lived jovially all their days? What thoughts have ſome of us, it may be, had, when in ſome fit of ſickneſs we apprehended Death approaching near us? How penitent, how religious ſeem'd we then to grow all on a ſudden! How came we to be of ſuch a different temper then, from that which we were in before? O, we ſaw our ſelves, in all appearance, then juſt on the very brink of Eternity; we thought our ſelves juſt ſtepping into Hell, if we repented not; and then we thought it time to repent indeed, and that it ſtood us upon as much as our Souls were worth to make haſte. And may we not be this moment, for ought we know, in the very ſame danger that we then thought our ſelves in? Do we know, any of us, that there is ſo much as one day, or one hour, betwixt this moment and Eternity? And why then are we not now in as great haſte to repent, as we were in then? How many that delay from time to time, are, when they leaſt fear it, knock'd down with a ſudden blow?

How

How many are cut off in the very act of ſin, when ſecure in themſelves, and thinking on no ſuch thing as dying, they were in Hell before they thought that death was near them? Is not our delaying our Repentance the likelieſt way in the World to provoke Almighty God to ſend out one of theſe ſwift Arrows to deſtroy us? O let us be ready, for it may come in an hour that we think not. Whilſt we ſo confidently promiſe our ſelves to morrow, and flatter our ſelves with purpoſes of repenting then, a ſudden deſtruction, a Phrenzy, a ſtupidity, or we know not what, may arreſt us, and not give us leave ſo much as to think that we are Sinners; or to ſay, Lord have mercy on us.

Doth not God ſeem, for this very reaſon, to conceal both the *time*, and the *manner* of our death from us, that we may be the more *watchful*, and take the more care to be always ready for dying at whatever *hour*, or in whatever *way* it ſhall pleaſe him to take us hence? Did we certainly know before-hand, juſt *when*, and *how* we muſt die, we would venture the more boldly to ſpend our time in ſin and vanity, till we knew the time was near; and then it may be ſome few days before, become a little more ſerious; juſt as it is the cuſtome of too many at this time to do before a Sacrament. Therefore God will not have

have us to know the time of our death, that we not knowing but it may be to morrow, may be every day ready; and ſo he may have the *honour*, and we the *comfort* of a pious life.

Moreover, as was before ſaid, To continue in ſin, in hopes that we may repent hereafter, as it is *to ſin that grace may abound*, which is a thing (if we believe the *Apoſtle*) greatly to be abhorred, *Rom.* VI. 1 So is it the moſt effectual courſe we can take to ſhorten our days, and to prevent the benefit we hope for. *The fear of the Lord prolongeth days; but the years of the wicked ſhall be ſhortened: The hope of the righteous ſhall be gladneſs, but the expectation of the wicked ſhall periſh*, Prov. X. 27, 28.

Again, We can hardly give any rational account, why God ſhould ſo ſtrictly, and under ſo ſevere Penalties enjoin us the practice of many excellent Vertues, and forbid us many foul Sins, if we may hope to pleaſe him, and be ſaved by a very *late*, or *death-bed Repentance*. Can ſuch Vertues as *Sobriety*, *Temperance* and *Chaſtity*, and many more, be thought commanded us as the proper Exerciſes of a *ſick* and *dying* man? Can the Sins of *Gluttony* and *Drunkenneſs*, *Chambering and Wantonneſs*, *Murther*, *Theft*, *Ambition*, *Covetouſneſs*, and more ſuch like, be forbidden upon pain of damnation, leſt a man ſhould be guilty of them on his *Death-bed*, or in his laſt

*Sick-*

*Sickneſs*; when 'tis ſomewhat hard to conceive, how a man ſhould have any thoughts of them? Or can we conceive, that the meaning of ſuch Commands is no more but this; You muſt either do theſe Duties, and avoid theſe Sins, while you live, or repent that you have not done ſo, when you are about to die? What were this but to ſay, That all the Commands of *holy living* ſignify no more, but this, That a man may ſafely break them all whilſt he liveth; if he can but keep them, when he can break them no more; or be ſorry that he hath broken them, when he is afraid he is juſt going to be damn'd for it; or reſolve to keep them, when he thinks he can live no longer?

What probability is there, that any *Reſolution* of repenting hereafter, is ſincere? We cannot *abſolutely reſolve* to repent hereafter, becauſe we cannot certainly know that we ſhall live hereafter; and if we reſolve but *conditionally*, to repent hereafter, that is, on ſuppoſition that we ſhall live to repent, we muſt ſeem content to be damn'd, if we dye before that time come, becauſe we know, That without Repentance we muſt be damn'd. I think one cannot in good earneſt reſolve to repent, unleſs he immediately do repent, when he reſolves upon it. How can any one imagine it too ſoon to do what he knows neceſſary to be done, and yet may never be done, if not juſt now?

No man can with any colour of reaſon be thought in earneſt, when he ſaith he reſolveth to do that another day, which he knows is to be done every day, and muſt of neceſſity be done ſometime, and yet he knows not whether he ſhall have another day or no. It's plain, ſuch a man doth not reſolve at all to repent, for he loves it not, and that's the reaſon he doth it not now, and will ſtill be as good a reaſon not to do it then; but in truth, all he reſolves upon, is, not to repent now, or to drive it off yet longer, and that's no reſolution at all to repent.

What folly is it to drive off our Repentance, till we be ſcourged and laſh'd unto it? If we make not haſte of our ſelves, and God have yet any kindneſs left in ſtore for us, he will whip us to it. If we will not otherwiſe awake out of ſleep, God, if he have not already determin'd we ſhall ſleep on unto death, will awake us with his Rod. And whether had the *Prodigal* better have ſtaid in his Father's Houſe, and continued in his Love, and under his conſtant Care and Providence, by obeying him at firſt; or have wandred abroad, as he did, till extreme want and ill uſage drove him home? If we will be ſaved, we muſt repent; and is it not a very fooliſh thing to ſtay till the whip drive us to it? Eſpecially when 'tis doubtful, whether or no the Repentance which begins in *Fear*, will end in *Love*, which

yet

yet if it do not, it will never bring us to Salvation.

And now after all this, I hope none will be so fooliſh as to flatter themſelves with a vain conceit of their being *Penitents*, when they are not; or to encourage themſelves with as vain hopes of repenting hereafter, whereof they can have no certainty. We find indeed *one* Example of a dying Penitent in the *Scripture*, who was accepted of God, and we find no more but one, that of the *Thief* upon the Croſs. But alas! he hath afforded but very ſmall Encouragement to any delaying Sinner, by his own happineſs in being crucified by the ſide of his Saviour. Here is, as I ſaid, but one ſingle Example, and yet had there been ten thouſand ſuch as this one was, I do not ſee how they could any more encourage a conſidering man to delay his Repentance one hour, becauſe no one knows whether after that hour he ſhall have ſo much time as that Malefactor had to Repent in, tho it was very ſhort, or whether in that ſhort time he ſhall repent as he did. Had never any Offender but one, been pardon'd by any King, could this be any reaſonable encouragement to all the Rebels and Malefactors in the Countrey to hold on rebelling, robbing, ſtealing, murthering, and committing all ſorts of capital Crimes in hopes of a Pardon; only

becauſe

becauſe once it fell out that ſome ſuch Offender was pardon'd? Indeed it will follow hence, that ſuch a Pardon may *poſſibly* be obtain'd, becauſe it was obtain'd: but it follows not that it may *ordinarily* or *probably* be obtain'd, becauſe it never was any more than once obtain'd, that we know of. Beſides, This is indeed an Example of a *late Repentance*; and many Examples of a late Repentance there are beſides this, though hardly another of one ſo late: but we are not ſure it is an Example of a *delayed Repentance*; for we cannot find that this late Penitent ever one minute delayed his Repentance after he was called to it, and convinced that it was his duty. And indeed, ſeeing this man's caſe was very extraordinary, he that would encourage himſelf by it, ought firſt to ſee that his own Caſe, in all conſiderable circumſtances, be like unto it.

If any one ask, What courſe is to be taken by thoſe who have long delay'd their Repentance, but are not yet in appearance near unto death? I know not what better Advice to give him than this: That he delay it no longer, but make all the haſte that poſſibly he can to repent now: And by how much the more time he hath already loſt, let him uſe ſo much the more care and diligence to improve that little which is yet behind, to his beſt advantage.

tage. Such an one had need to give himself, in a manner, wholly henceforward to this great Work, and should not suffer any business that he can well shun, to disturb him in it. He should not now grudge to pinch himself of time in relation to all bodily and worldly Concerns, as much as he did God and his own Soul before; or to bestow as much upon these, if he can possibly, as he used to do upon those. No self-examination, no humiliation, no prayers, no tears, no striving to do good, can be too much. He had need to do almost nothing else but bewail his sinful life, denying himself all the Pleasures, and all the Comforts of this World, save only the necessary supports of life. This seems to me the least he can do, to satisfy himself of the sincerity of so late a Repentance, or to lay a foundation for a comfortable hope of God's acceptance. I shall now conclude the whole Discourse with those words, *Isa.* LV. 6, 7. *Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.*

FINIS.